ISSUE TEN

quote from the piece

MAN'S WORLD

LOCK UP YOUR DAUGHTERS

APRIL X 2023

RIGHT-WING BODYBUILDERS WITH ANIME PFPS ARE COMING.

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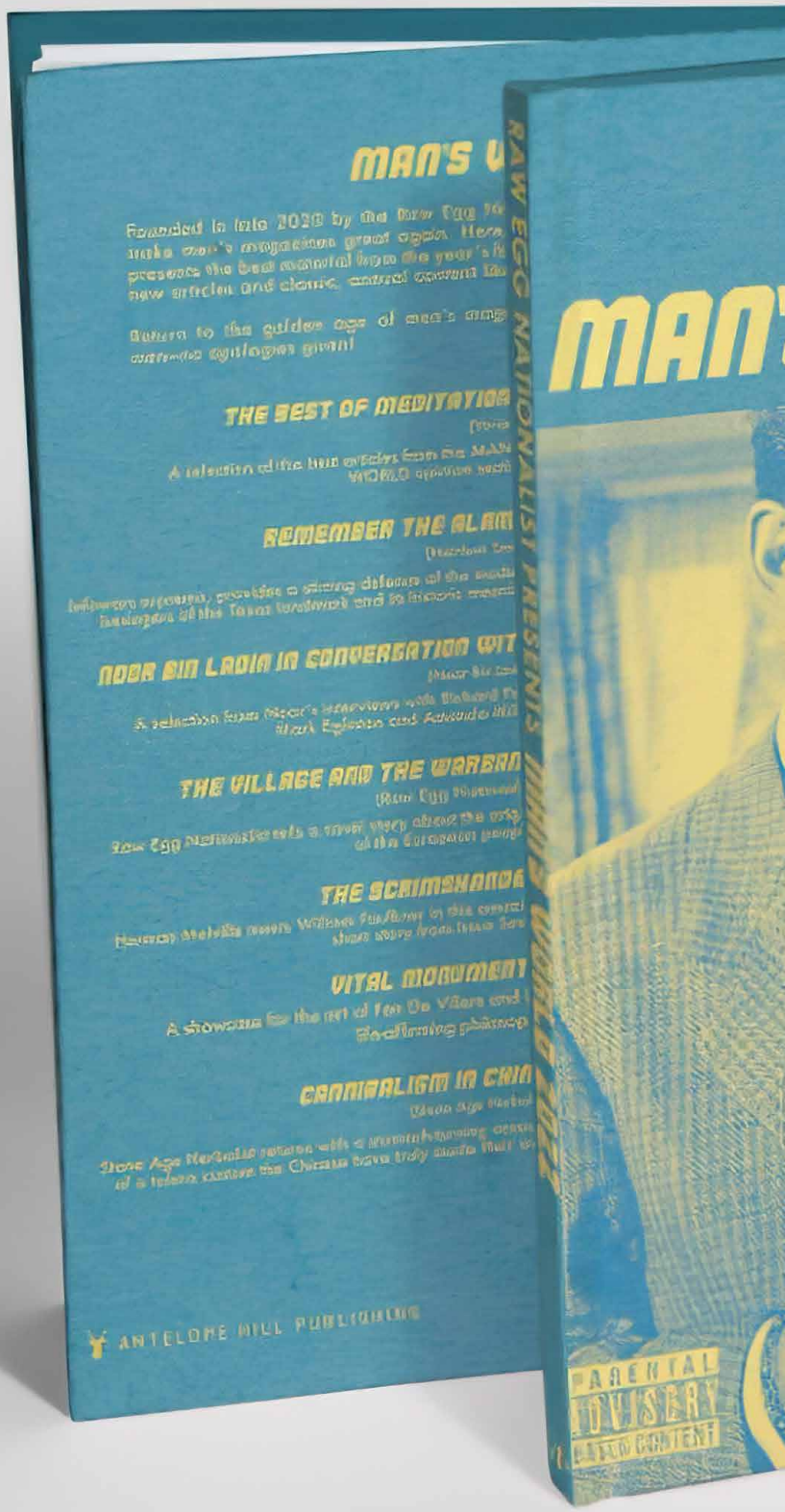
MAN'S
THE BEST OF MEDITATION
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NOOR BIN LADIN IN CONVERSATION WIT
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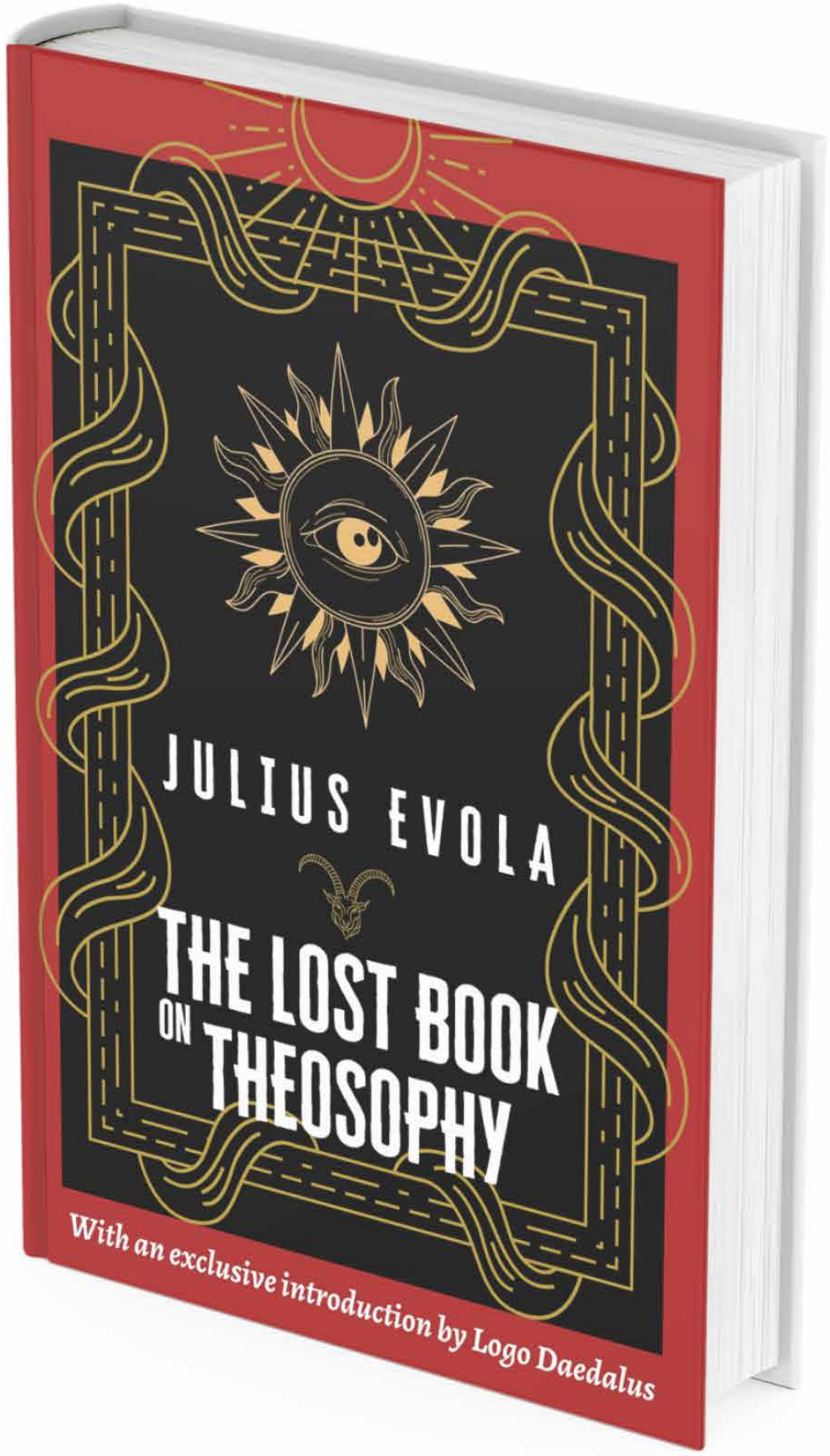
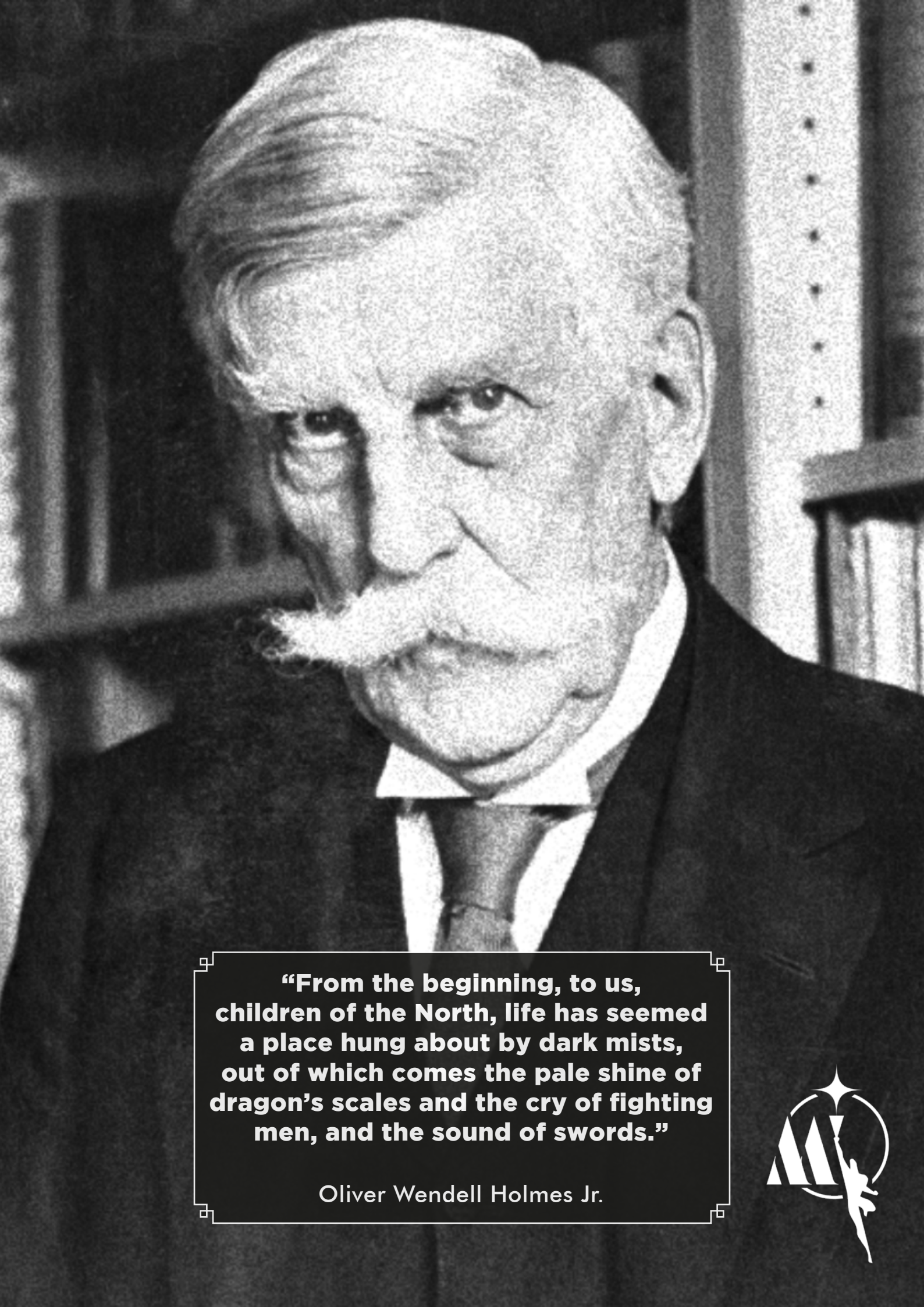


DISSIDENT CLASSICS BOOKS



“From the beginning, to us, children of the North, life has seemed a place hung about by dark mists, out of which comes the pale shine of dragon’s scales and the cry of fighting men, and the sound of swords.”

Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.

Perception.

Reality.

If there's one thing we understand here at MAN'S WORLD, it's that perception matters. We know that you, our readers, want things to be as they seem. You've had enough of fake promises, fake influencers and fake news. That's why we've staked our reputation on providing you with the most honest, what-you-see-is-what-you-get content, now and always.

MAN'S WORLD: If it looks like Gigachad, it is Gigachad.

MAN'S WORLD

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MAN'S WORLD

LOCK UP YOUR DAUGHTERS

APRIL X 2023

RIGHT-WING BODYBUILDERS WITH ANIME PFPS ARE COMING.

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240 CONAN THE CULTURE WARRIOR
CONAN ESQ. tells us why Robert E. Howard's most famous creation is more pertinent today than almost any other fantasy character

ESSAY
"People think they read Conan for the simple escapism, but it's the opposite: they actually read him for the verisimilitude. Those who haven't lost the gift of true sight are beginning to understand in their bones what life was like in the Hyborian Age"
CONAN THE CULTURE WARRIOR
Robert E. Howard's classic stories are anything but shallow fare
by CONAN ESQ. (@conan_esq)
In the century since Robert E. Howard's first published Conan story, the Cimmerian has claimed a thread in the tapestry of western myth, becoming a culture hero alongside Robin Hood or King Arthur. Nobody asks, "Conan!? Who's that!". Everyone knows Conan, even if only by osmosis. Generations have grown up knowing his image and legend; our own noble savage.
Conan entered myth in a number of vehicles: long comic runs, feature films and television programs, video games, action figures, and something like sixty novels by fifteen different authors. But the original stories are surprisingly few. Howard only ever wrote about 360,000 words of Conan tales, including a single novel (Hour of the Dragon). That word count is roughly in line with a single book of George Martin's Song of Ice and
Image overleaf: illustration of Conan by Hugh Rankin, from Weird Tales 24:4 (1934)
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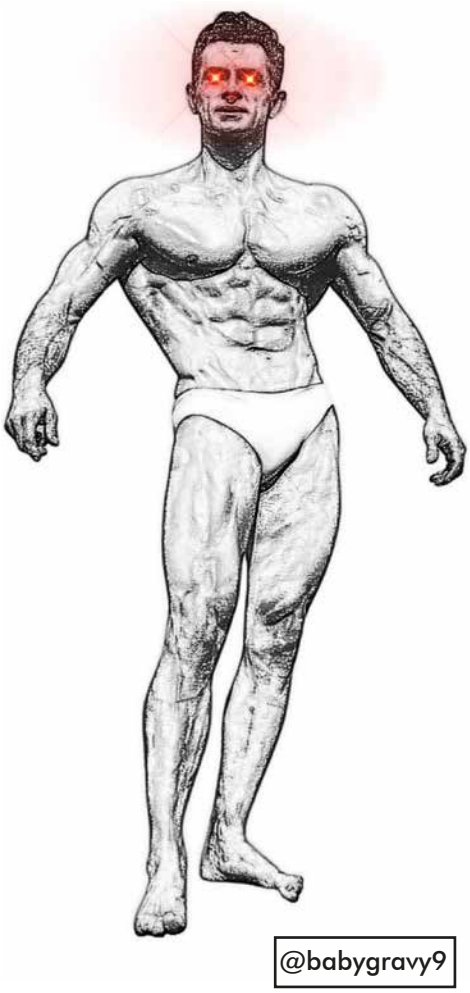
...AND MUCH, MUCH MORE

RAW EGG NATIONALIST *Your editor*

"The MAN'S WORLD decade!"

Ten is a special number. Of course, if we were operating within the sexagesimal, or base 60, system of the ancient Sumerians and Babylonians, there would be little reason for fanfare about this being MAN'S WORLD Issue Ten. But as such, since we've been operating for some time within the mental coordinates of the base ten system, it's big news indeed that MAN'S WORLD has now broken into double digits. Ten issues, hundreds of articles, hundreds of thousands of readers — and we mustn't forget those two amazing Annuals either, or the MAN'S WORLD Digest (third issue out now in paperback via Amazon). It's been a wild ride, but believe me, this is only the beginning.

So what do we have in store for you in this very special issue? A lot. Once again, we're nudging on 400 pages of essays, short stories, recipes, fitness and lifestyle advice, art, hilarious fake advertising and so much more. You will, no doubt, have noticed a good deal of experimentation taking place in the style and formatting of the magazine over recent issues. I'm pleased to say that I've settled, for now, on a format that I believe to be visually pleasing and distinctive, embodying the MAN'S WORLD mission to revive the spirit of men's magazines of yore, while also providing a reading experience that is truly like nothing else on the market today. It's also worth noting, before I continue, that the MAN'S WORLD website has now migrated to a new domain, whose address can be seen at the bottom of almost every page: mansworldmag.online. The website is your one-stop shop for everything MAN'S WORLD, including our store, which will be hosting some incredible new merchandise shortly. Our first line of T-shirts, including the unforgettable "He's racist on the internet" tee, was a roaring success, and I'd like to thank everyone who bought a tee and potentially compromised themselves in public by wearing it.



"If we were operating within the sexagesimal, or base 60, system of the ancient Sumerians and Babylonians, there would be little reason for fanfare about this being MAN'S WORLD Issue Ten"

Back to the issue at hand. We have the wonderful fiction debut of a long-time hero of mine, Mr CHARLS CARROLL. "Night Places" is every bit as crazy, funny and disturbing as you'd expect. More please, Mr Carroll! I also make my own fiction debut, with a story about a morning in the life of a female "content creator". Let's call her "Paella". The BRONZE AGE PERVERT returns. PATRICK CASEY (cue dancing triangle!). SPANDRELL. NOOR BIN LADIN. Rambo. Duelling, Book reviews. How to cook the classic Swedish dish fufu... Now I've run out space!

Welcome, my friends to the end of the first and the beginning of the second MAN'S WORLD decade!

WANT TO WRITE FOR MAN'S WORLD?

Here at Man's World, we're always looking for new contributors to dazzle, inform and amuse our readership, which now stands in the hundreds of thousands.
If you have an idea for an article, of any kind, or even a new section or regular feature, don't hesitate to get in contact by sending an email to mansworldmagazine@protonmail.com.

Generally, the word limit for articles is 3,000; although we will accept longer and (much) shorter articles where warranted. Take a look at the sections in this issue for guidance and inspiration.

MAN'S WORLD

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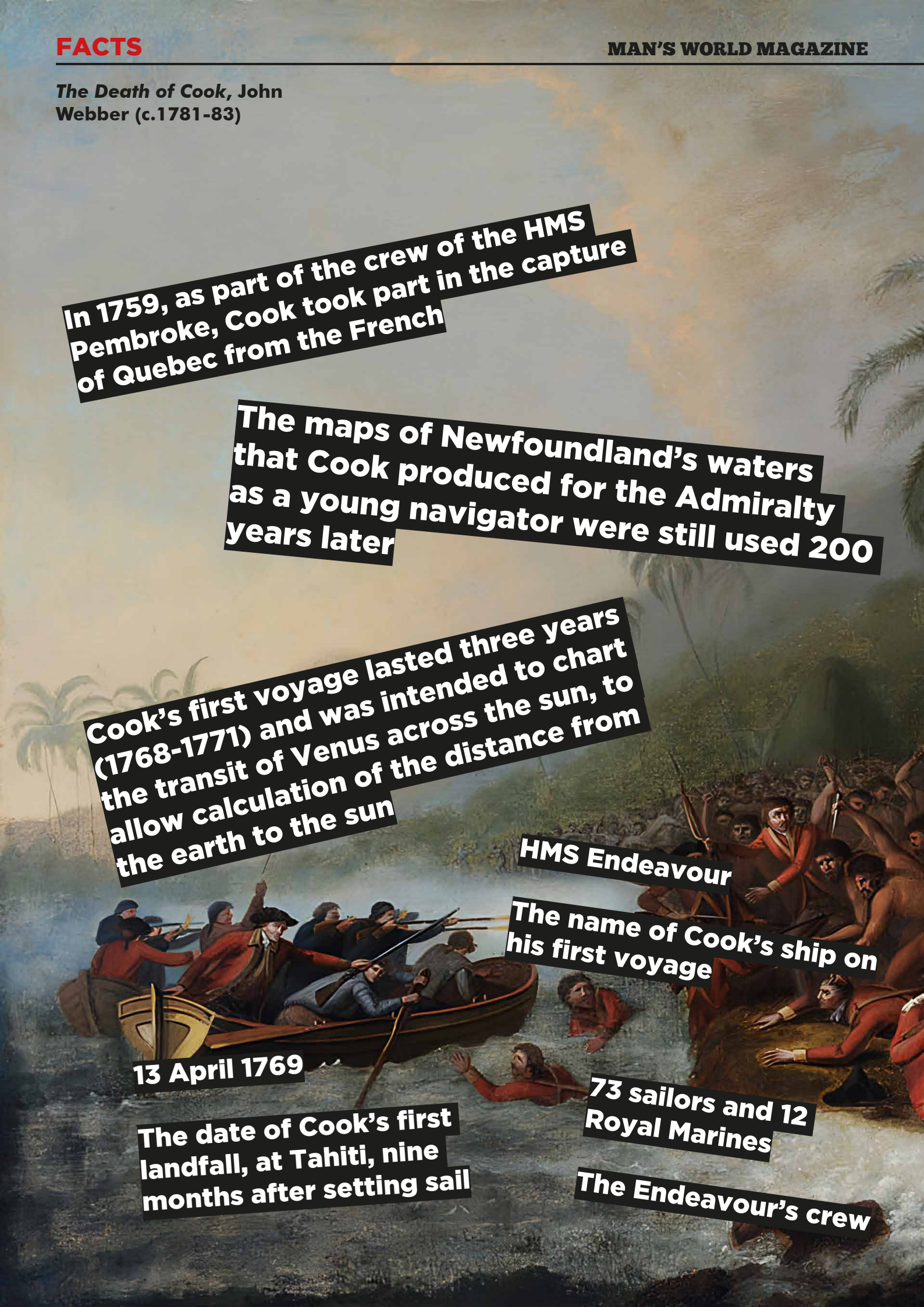
HE WENT TO KYIV SO THAT THEY COULD HAVE WHAT HE HAS AT HOME: A WIFE, A BULL AND A CHILD THAT ISN'T HIS.

OUR COFFEE IS FOR HIM AND FOR ALL THOSE WHO FIGHT FOR FREEDOM.

Cuck Operator Coffee Kompany



The Death of Cook, John Webber (c.1781-83)

In 1759, as part of the crew of the HMS Pembroke, Cook took part in the capture of Quebec from the French

The maps of Newfoundland's waters that Cook produced for the Admiralty as a young navigator were still used 200 years later

Cook's first voyage lasted three years (1768-1771) and was intended to chart the transit of Venus across the sun, to allow calculation of the distance from the earth to the sun

HMS Endeavour

The name of Cook's ship on his first voyage

13 April 1769

The date of Cook's first landfall, at Tahiti, nine months after setting sail

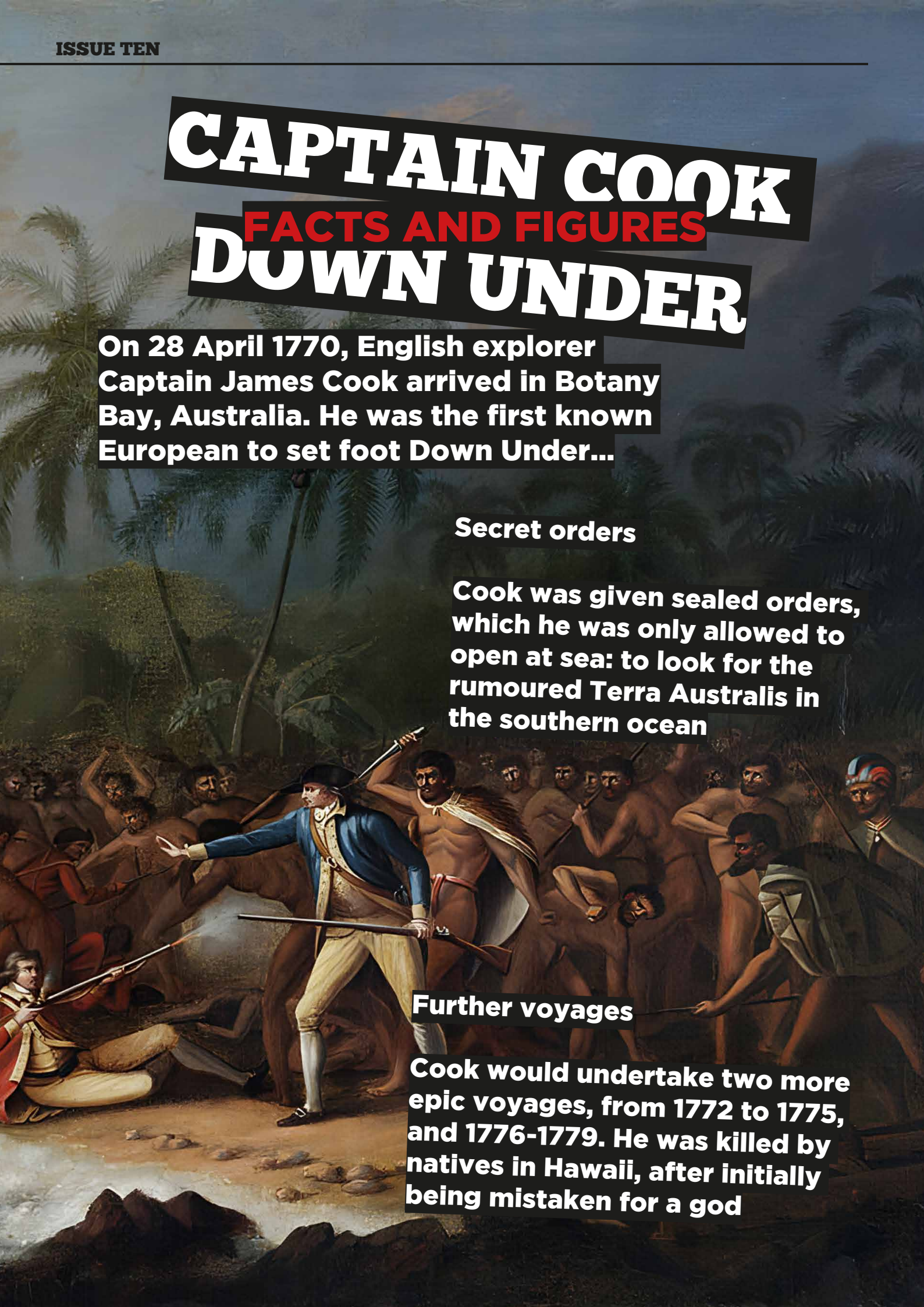
73 sailors and 12 Royal Marines

The Endeavour's crew

CAPTAIN COOK DOWN UNDER

FACTS AND FIGURES

On 28 April 1770, English explorer Captain James Cook arrived in Botany Bay, Australia. He was the first known European to set foot Down Under...



Secret orders

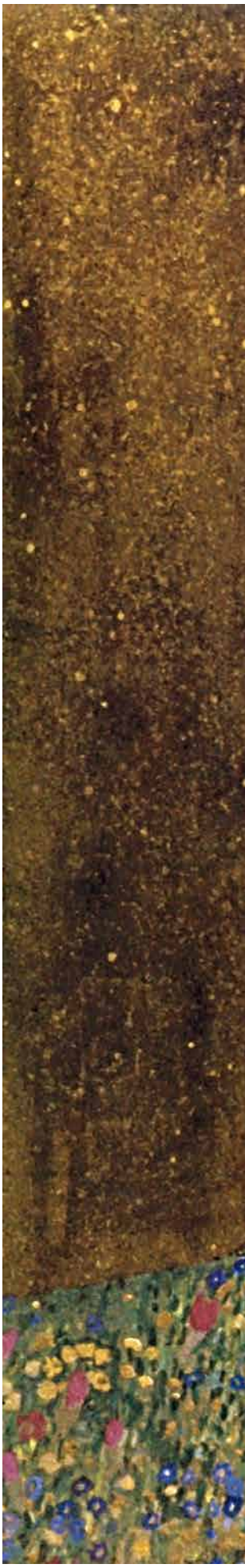
Cook was given sealed orders, which he was only allowed to open at sea: to look for the rumoured Terra Australis in the southern ocean

Further voyages

Cook would undertake two more epic voyages, from 1772 to 1775, and 1776-1779. He was killed by natives in Hawaii, after initially being mistaken for a god

The History of ~Western Art~

with RIVELINO THE ARTIST

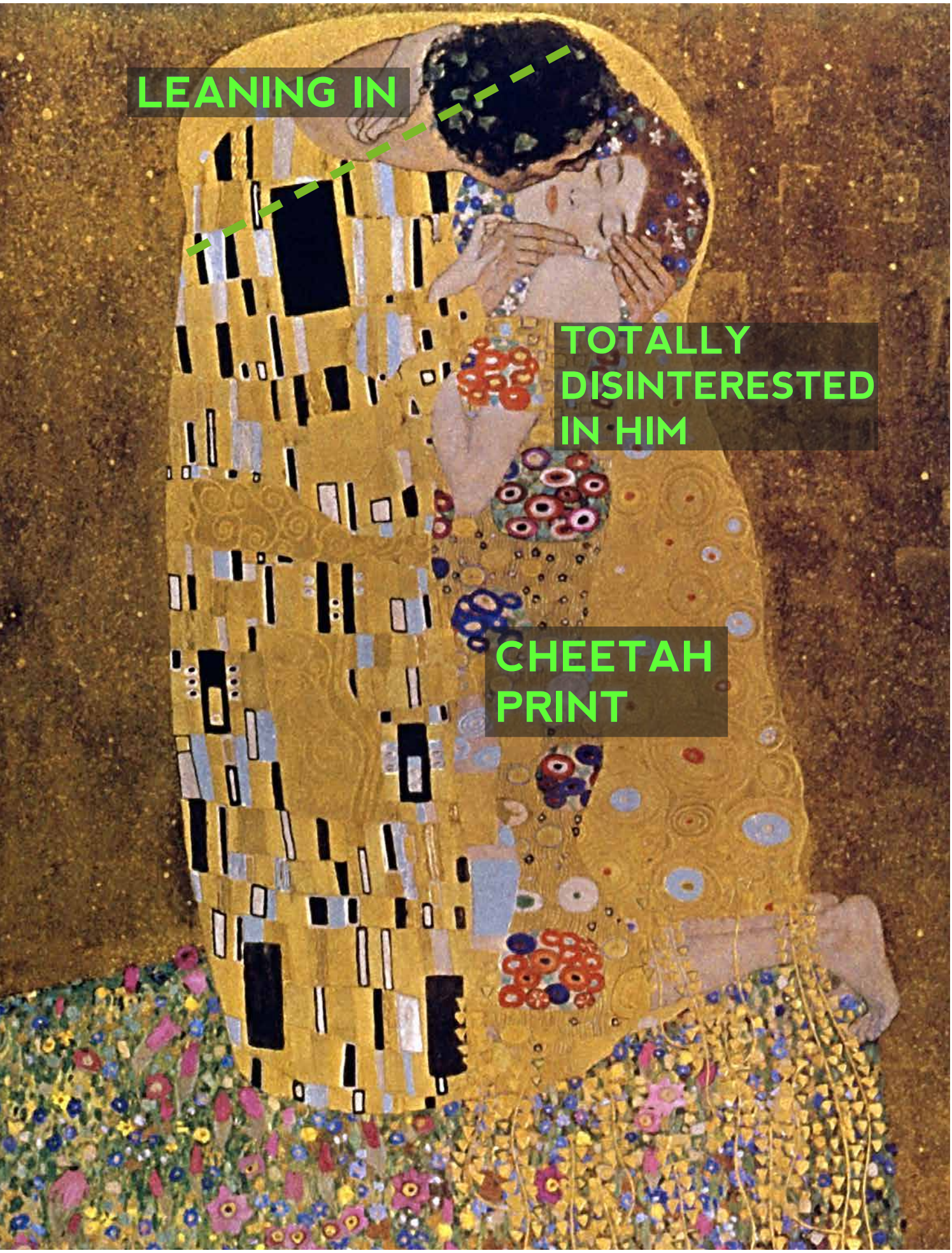


"The Kiss", Gustav Klimt, 1907-8
oil and gold leaf on canvas
Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna

"Wrapped up in each other, the lovers are enfolded in their everlasting kiss. Their love is out of this world (the only location is this ethereal meadow of rich cloth and jewel-bright paint) and even a little celestial: their heads are haloed in gold leaf. There's no sense of bodies beneath all this opulence, except for her elegant toes. Bare feet, flowers in their hair: no wonder hippies loved Klimt's masterpiece and it remains the most famous kiss in painting. A perfect square of a canvas, a perfect fit of a couple: it is just what young lovers often feel, dovetailed together in their kiss as the world dissolves into a shimmer around them."

So says an esteemed critic of this famous painting by horny Austrian artist Gustav Klimt. But, frankly, all I can see here is the cheetah-print dress she's wearing, and if you know me, you'll know that can only mean one thing: SHE'S A CHEATER! I mean, can't he tell she's just not that into him? She's literally asleep in his arms!

Diagnosis: RUN WHILE YOU STILL CAN, 'COS SHE'S A BAD BITCH!


LEANING IN
TOTALLY DISINTERESTED IN HIM
CHEETAH PRINT

TYPE

MAN'S WORLD MAGAZINE

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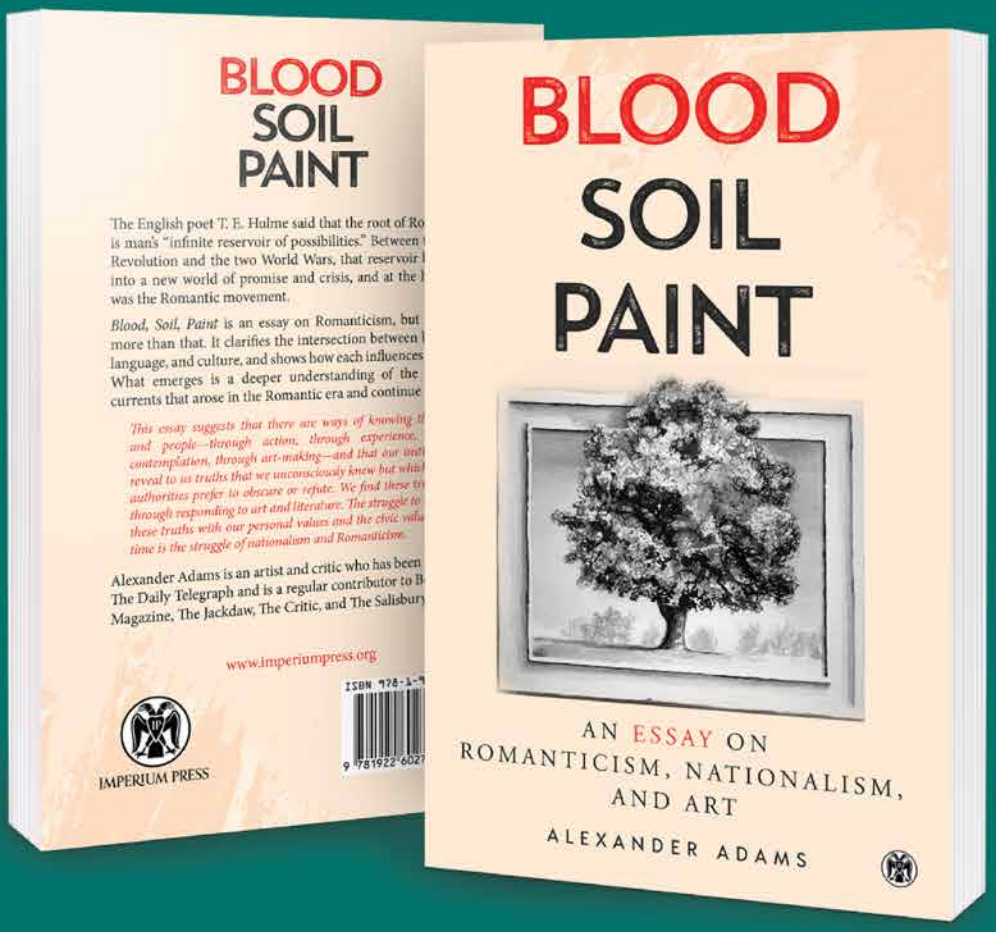
BLOOD, SOIL, PAINT

Blood, Soil, Paint is an essay on Romanticism, but it's much more than that.
It shows how aesthetics, race, and nation intersect to produce culture.
To understand the modern world we must understand its roots in Romanticism.

Blood, Soil, Paint gives us the key.


BLOOD
SOIL
PAINT
The English poet T. E. Hulme said that the root of Ro
is man's "infinite reservoir of possibilities." Between
Revolution and the two World Wars, that reservoir
into a new world of promise and crisis, and at the
was the Romantic movement.
Blood, Soil, Paint is an essay on Romanticism, but
more than that. It clarifies the intersection between
language, and culture, and shows how each influences
What emerges is a deeper understanding of the
currents that arose in the Romantic era and continue
Alexander Adams is an artist and critic who has been
The Daily Telegraph and is a regular contributor to B
Magazine, The Jackdaw, The Critic, and The Salisbury
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AN ESSAY ON
ROMANTICISM, NATIONALISM,
AND ART
ALEXANDER ADAMS

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by SARA SASS

MONEY SENT BY THE US TO UKRAINE...

- **$9.9 BILLION** for food and humanitarian aid
- **$15.1 BILLION** budgetary aid through the Economic Support Fund and loans
- **$8.9 BILLION** in training, equipment, weapons, logistics support, and other assistance provided through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative
- **$12.7 BILLION** in weapons and equipment from the U.S. Department of Defense, including equipment that cannot be readily replaced/replicated
- **$1.3 BILLION** in grants and loans provided through the Foreign Military Financing program

...COULD HAVE BEEN SPENT ON:

- One laying hen and one year's feed for every American family

- Filling every American's car tank
- Planting 890,000,000 trees in the eroded and deforested areas of the United States

- Fixing the lead-contaminated water system in Flint, Michigan 58 times over
- Building 325 recycling plants

RED EYE

The cocktail from *Cocktail*. A hangover cure you can drink any time — even when you're not hungover.

30ml vodka / 350ml beer / 180ml tomato juice / 1 egg white / 1 egg yolk / lime and seasoning

Rub the rim of a tall glass with lime, then dip in a seasoning mixture.Add the ingredients to the glass one at a time. Don't stir them. Serve.

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Locally caught freshwater fish in the US contain up to 280 times more PFAS than commercially caught fish*

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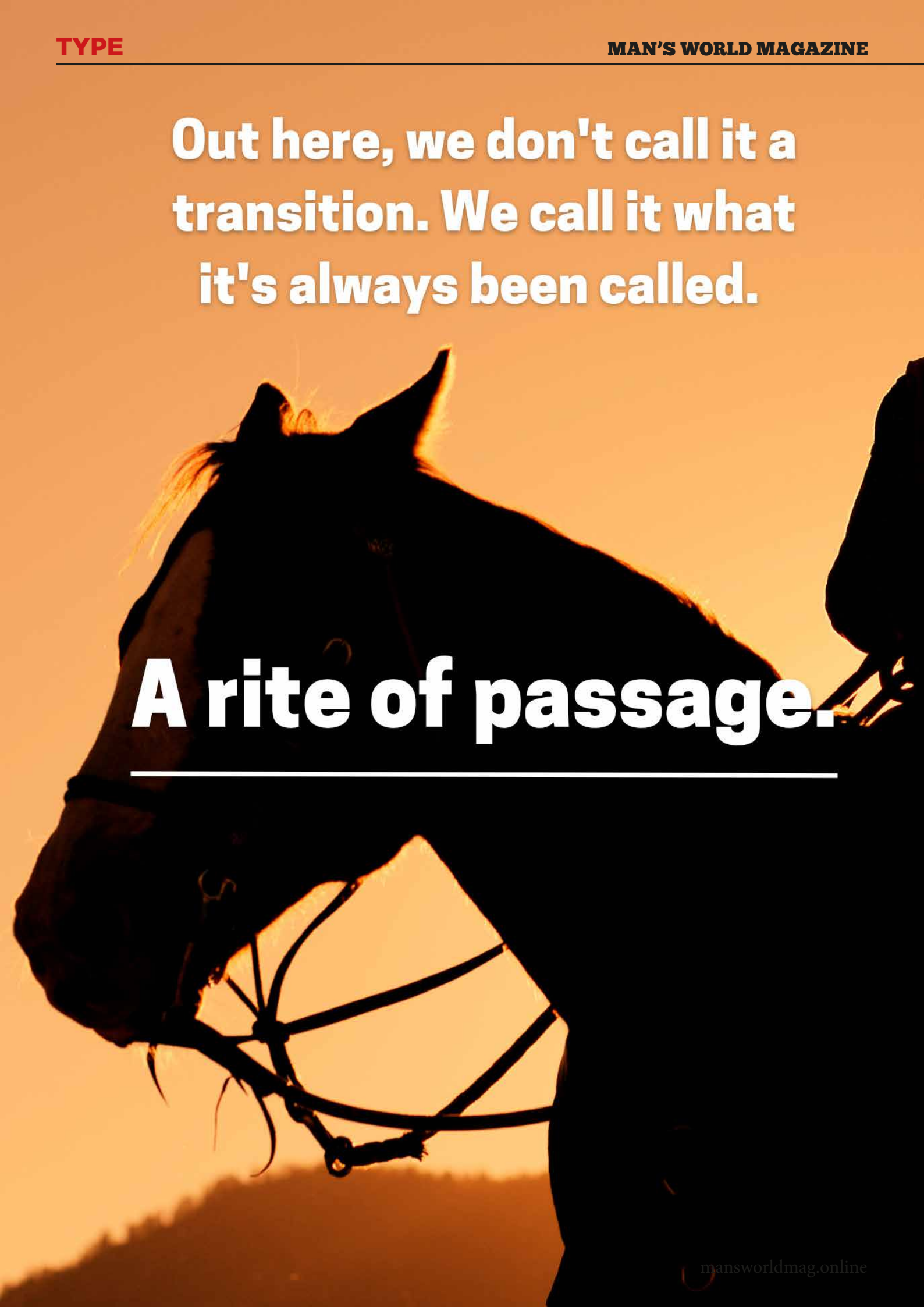
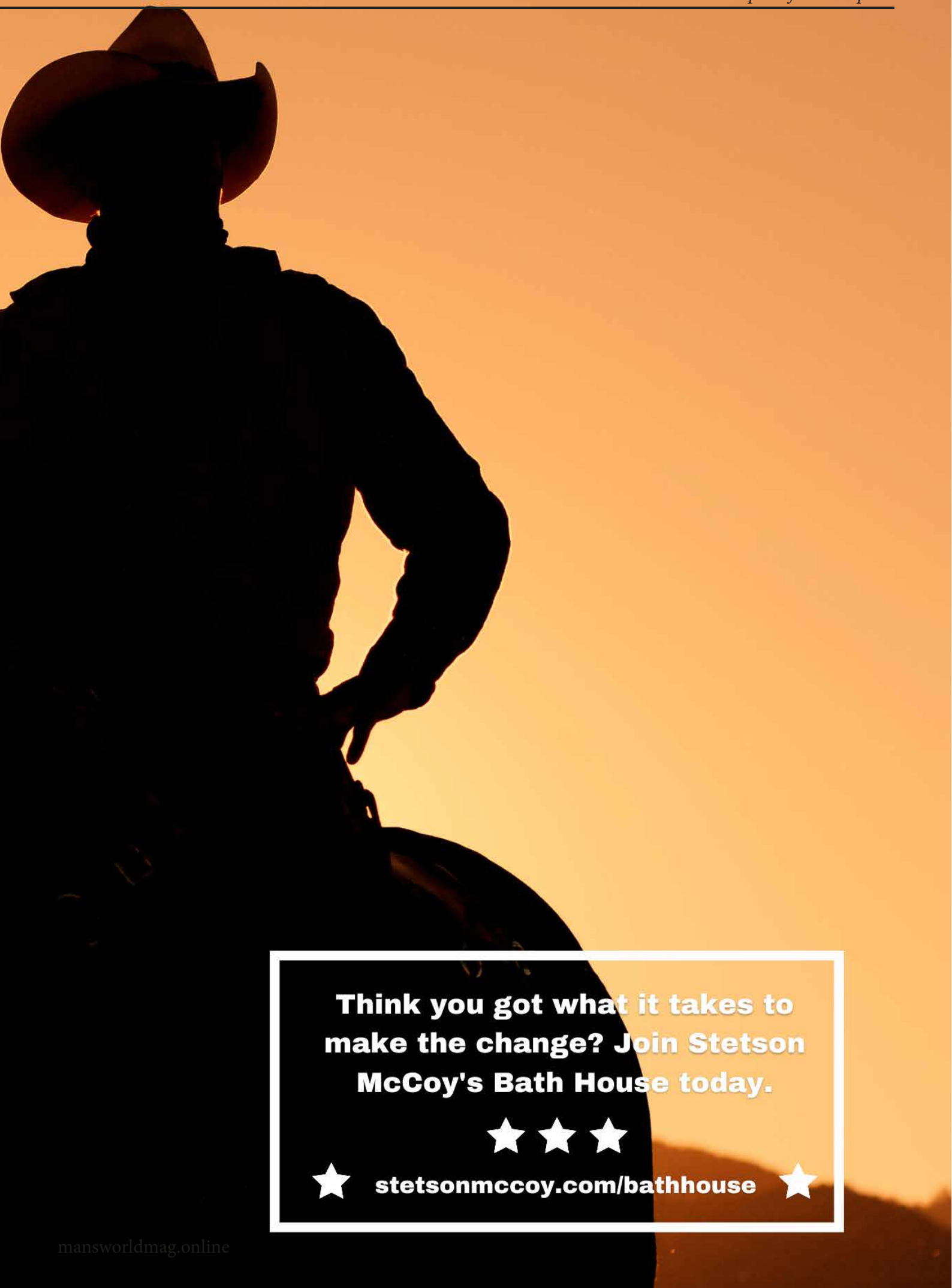
I AM PART OF THE LACTASE PERSIST-ENCE GENERA-TION


Out here, we don't call it a transition. We call it what it's always been called.
A rite of passage.


Think you got what it takes to make the change? Join Stetson McCoy's Bath House today.
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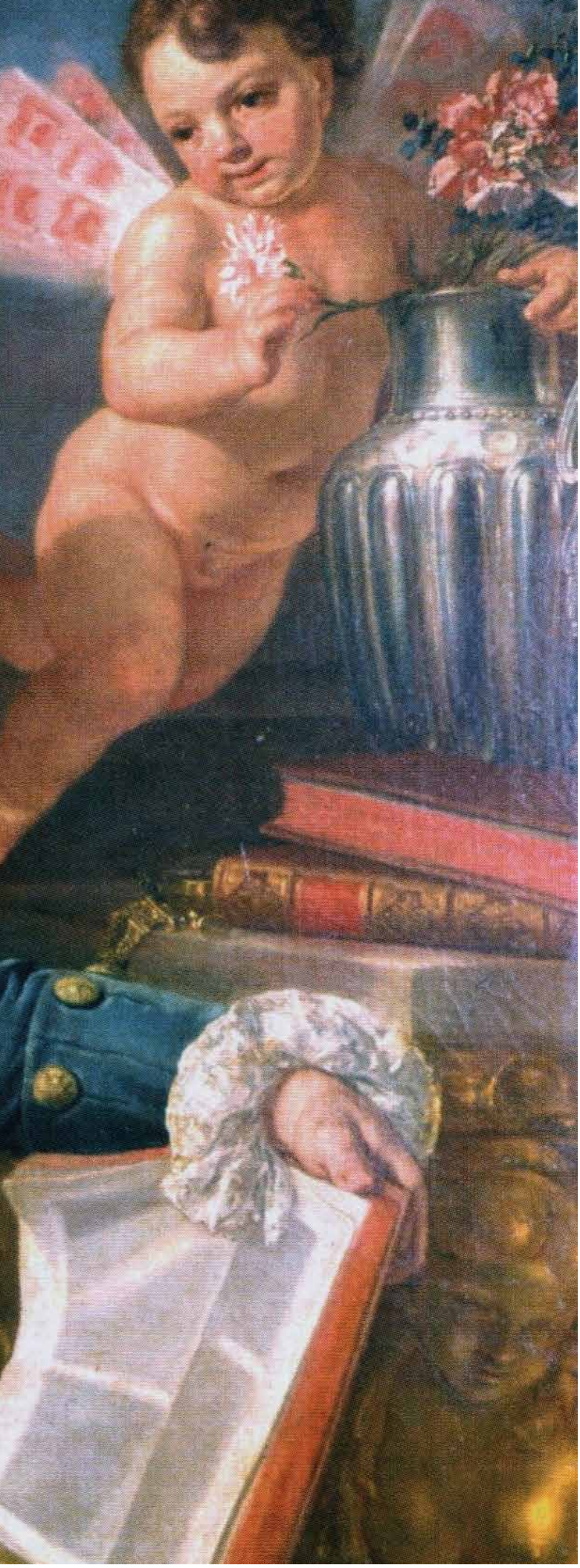
WHO HE?



GIACOMO CASANOVA

The man whose name is a byword for reckless pursuit of love

by Outis (@nobodyblindsme)

There's only one thing you think of when you hear the name Casanova. You shouldn't, because the man was the absolute essence of vitality and his legacy deserves to be more than simply sleeping with half of Europe. In addition to being an infamous womaniser, he was also a soldier, preacher, charlatan, physician, spy, violinist, gambling addict, entrepreneur and many more things too. A true adventurer in all senses of the word, we wouldn't even know of him if not also for his ability as a writer. Casanova's autobiography came to twelve volumes and over 3,500 pages, unfinished at the time of his death.

Adventure was in his blood. His ancestor Don Jacobo Casanova was secretary to King Alfonso V

of Aragon, but fled to Rome in 1428 after abducting a nun. Jacobo's son Juan fled Rome for Como after killing an officer of the king and would later die on a voyage with Christopher Columbus.

Giacomo Casanova was born in Venice in 1725, the first of six children. Both his parents were actors and often left young Casanova with his grandmother while they toured abroad. His earliest memory is from the age of 8, when his grandmother took him to visit a witch to try and cure his frequent nosebleeds. He was a weak and sickly boy, so his family sent him off to Padua for an education and to be free of the burden of raising him.

In Padua, Casanova's health improved and he proved himself an excellent student and something of a prodigy. After months in a boarding house of deplorable conditions he was able to move in with his teacher's family. There, as an 11 year old, he had his first awakening, as his teacher's younger sister Bettina, 13 years old, became quite fond of Casanova and would sometimes fondle him. Bettina would later contract smallpox and survive, but not before giving Casanova a mild case which left him with a few smallpox scars on his face, his only physical blemishes.

By the age of 17 Casanova had graduated from the University of Padua with a doctorate in law, but during this time he also discovered gambling, which would become the other great passion of his life. After writing to his grandmother for help with his debts, she instead took him back to Venice.

Casanova soon became acquainted with the elderly senator Alvise Malipiero, who became something of a mentor and patron to Casanova, teaching him how to move in high society while appreciating fine foods and arts. After experiencing the good life, he loses his virginity to two sisters in a night-long ménage. He then has a dalliance with a girl who was the object of desire for his patron Malipiero, which puts an end to his patronage and fine living. The dalliance had more than immediate consequences, as Casanova would meet the girl, Teresa Imer many years later and discover he was now a father.

The next year would be described as a whirlwind by any other man. First his grandmother dies, and then Casanova attempts to continue his ecclesiastical studies. He's expelled from seminary almost immediately and soon finds himself in jail. Given ample freedoms as a prisoner, on one of his nights out he contracts his first venereal disease. On release from prison he has a brief encounter with a Greek slave girl before going to Rome and finding employment as a scribe.

His time as a scribe is also short-lived, as he is made the scapegoat of a scandal and forced to leave the city. On his way back to Venice he meets a family of poor singers managed by their mother: two girls, one boy and one castrato, Bellino. Casanova describes how he is convinced Bellino is actually a girl in disguise because no boy could ever have such beauty. His instincts are proven correct and she admits to being a woman called Teresa before spending the night together. A whirlwind of a year indeed, for Casanova is still only 18 years old.

Casanova and Teresa fully intended to marry and his story may very well have ended there, but fate had other plans. Losing his passport, he was once again arrested before managing to quickly escape. He then decides to join the military and gives up working under the Church for good. Teresa takes up a promising job as a singer in Naples and they go their separate ways with much sadness. Teresa gives birth to Casanova's son later that year.

Now a soldier for the Republic of Venice, he ships off for his post in Constantinople. His free time is spent making influential friends and losing his money at cards. It is a bit too much of a boring life for him so he leaves the military and heads back to Venice, but not before squeezing in time for a noblewoman in Corfu, an attempt to organise a militia and another arrest.

Back in Venice, he tries his hand at being a professional gambler, which only provides him with more debt, so he takes up work as a violinist. Returning home from the orchestra late one night, Casanova shares a gondola with a senator who suffers from a stroke during the ride. Taking him to a doctor who then applies a healing salve of mercury, the senator's condition deteriorates until Casanova removes the mercury and saves the senator's life.

The senator, convinced that Casanova was too young to know such superior medicinal tricks, believes that he had supernatural help. Casanova plays along and discovers the senator has interests in the occult. This would prove incredibly fortuitous, as many members of the upper class dabbled in such affairs and this would open many doors for Casanova, in addition to providing many opportunities to con them out of their riches. In any case, the senator is indebted to Casanova and becomes his patron.

Many of Casanova's later adventures would fit into a formula of first finding patronage with a wealthy nobleman, at which point he could live the high life and seduce every woman in sight. Many of the young women he was with he would find a husband for before moving on to the next girl. After months, or sometimes years in the same place his habits would catch up to him and he'd flee the city for a new one to start again.

Winning the lottery in 1750, Casanova travels to Paris, living it up in every city along the way. On arrival he discovers that Parisians are obsessed with following the fashion trends of their nobility, which one could take advantage of for financial success. Even a womaniser of Casanova's stature is taken back by how much French women sleep around without shame.

The next few years were what you would expect from Casanova at this point. He rubbed shoulders with high society, met kings and queens and eventually ran out of money. Heading back to Venice, Casanova would begin one half of his most famous relationship. Falling in love with a young girl he refers to as only "C.C.", he desires marriage, but her family opposes the union and shuts her up in an island convent to stop him getting to her.

But this doesn't stop our hero from frequently visiting C.C, who does not wish to be a nun and regards him as her husband. On one visit he receives a letter from another nun referred to only as "M.M." who instructs him to meet her at a private apartment that night. The first encounter doesn't go smoothly, because it takes too long for them to go all the way. On their subsequent visits they waste less time and Casanova eventually discovers M.M. has a lover watching from a hidden room. Later, the lover would also join in on the fun, and C.C. too.

Despite living such a debaucherous life, Casanova was yet to experience his greatest adventure, but that was soon to change. On the night of the 25th of July, 1755, Giacomo Casanova was arrested by the Inquisition. Charged with possession of magical books and occult manuscripts, he was taken to the top floor of the Doge's Palace, which served as a prison for political prisoners and high profile criminals.

The prison, named "the Leads" for its lead roofing panels, was a typically horrible 18th century jail. After 4 months in jail (Casanova did not know he had been sentenced to five years) he plans his escape by digging through a hole in the floor using a door bolt he had found and sharpened. A day before his planned escape, Casanova is moved to another jail cell and his plan goes up in smoke.

Now in a larger cell, Casanova communicates with a renegade priest by the name of Father Balbi in his old cell through letters hidden in book spines. Together, they plan a new escape. A year later, on the eve of a festival in which the palace would be empty the duo put their escape into action. Balbi digs through the walls to reach Casanova and they make their way to the roof. They find a ladder and use some bed sheets as rope to descend and break through a window into the palace. Overcome by sleep, they awaken at dawn and make their way through the empty palace until meeting a guard who lets them out after being told they were guests accidentally locked in the building overnight.

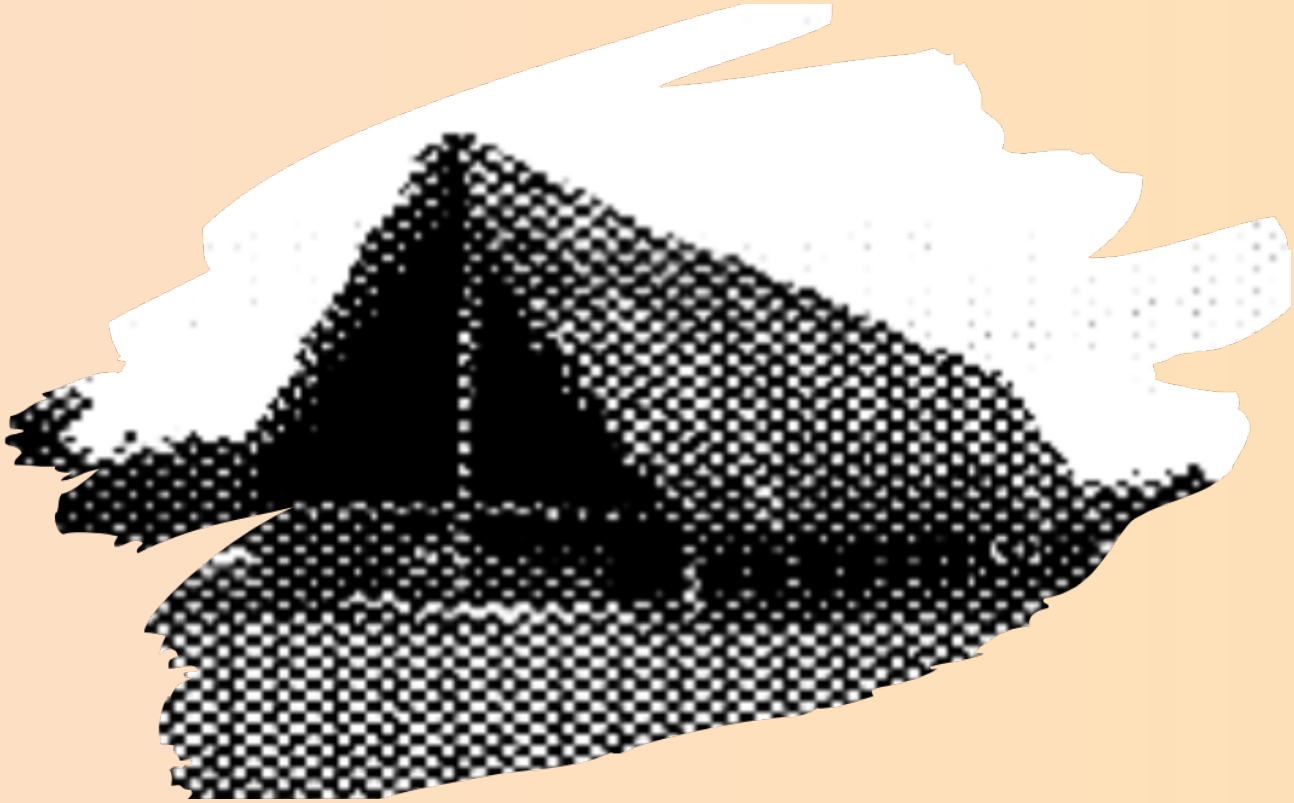
Fleeing to France, Casanova would amass a new fortune by helping the French government establish a state lottery. The next few decades would be spent in his old formula of patronage and seduction across various European countries while occasionally working as a spy, usually for the French.

He never conquered his weakness for a pretty girl. At the age of 38 he notoriously fell in love with an 18 year old named Leonilda and wished to marry. When he met her mother Lucrezia he discovered she was an old flame, and Leonilda his daughter. He slept with them both that night in what he describes as the most pleasurable night of his life.

In his final years, when writing his memoirs, he would confess a complete lack of remorse for his financial deceptions. To Casanova, the people he swindled were all fools, so they deserved it, and "deceiving a fool, in short, is an endeavour worthy of a man of wit." As for his deception of women, this was a different matter because both parties were deceived and he fell in love easily.

Casanova was tall, intelligent, talented and he had the Devil's luck. Yet aside from his good luck, he wasn't the kind of rare man that only comes along every thousand years, or even every hundred. Many of his exploits and traits are not particularly admirable to the morally upright. You may laugh at such an understatement, but everything he did is entirely achievable in the world of today – except for speaking with the kings and queens of European nations. If we can learn just one thing from Giacomo Casanova, it would be that anything is possible if you apply yourself to the challenge.

MEDITATIONS



RAW EGG NATIONALIST

The Longhouse Illusion

"The matriarchal ideal is an illusion"

Strike while the iron is hot. I have no idea where this proverb first originated, but its wisdom is clear enough. We can at least date it to the mid-seventeenth century, when the great Oliver Cromwell made the addendum that sometimes the iron must be *made hot* by striking it first. Also very wise. In any case, it was with hot iron at the forefront of my brain that I recently began thinking of the book that would succeed my most recent, *The Eggs Benedict Option*.

As with *The Eggs Benedict Option*, a potential title came to me before any actual idea for the book's content. First there was *Lift, Laugh, Love*. I liked that, mainly because it made me laugh. Then *12 Rules for Strife*, which I also liked, also because it made me laugh. I could imagine getting a decent rise out of JBP with that too ("Find another corner of the internet to sully, you evil coward!").

Both of these books, I supposed, would be based *how-tos* on sorting your life out, with a mixture of philosophy, history and science, but also eminently practical advice like how to put together a workout routine, how to build a diet and track your calories, and how to reduce your exposure to toxic chemicals like xenoestrogens. Not bad for a few minutes' toilet thinking, if I may

say so myself.

Then I had a title and an idea at the same time: *The Longhouse*. Now, you're probably familiar with the term from *Bronze Age Mindset*, and you probably know what it refers to, more or less: the cloying, claustrophobic communitarian vision of the modern left. The term itself is a reference to the longhouses – great shared barns, basically – in which the early Neolithic farmers of Europe used to live. By using it, BAP wants us to know that the world of Neolithic Europe, before the arrival of the Indo-Europeans like a thunderbolt from the steppe, was actually a world much more similar to our own than you might think. This is more than just a comparison, since it tells us that things have been this way before and they changed – and so they can change again. (So who, then, will be the thunderbolt this time around?)

The longhouse way of life was basically a matriarchal as opposed to patriarchal one, in which women and woman-ish ideals prevailed to the exclusion of men and masculine ones. In this kind of society, it was women who held the whip hand, so to speak. Sex was promiscuous, meaning that monogamy and therefore marriage was unknown. This was a direct function of the fact that matriarchal societies were also free of private property: people and things were all held in common. As a result, men had no real power to command women, and in fact often found themselves on the receiving end of sharp treatment from the other sex, especially if they didn't pull their weight or pass muster. In a very real sense, the longhouse itself was a physical manifestation of this "egalitarian" life in which all was shared: a great open building where an entire clan of people would dwell, without separation and without privacy.

The female-centric nature of longhouse life was of course reflected in spiritual life too. Just as the average Neolithic man was crushed by his domesticated existence, so too was his mind smothered by the enormous rear-end of the Neolithic answer to today's twerking BBW, the "mother goddess" represented by the various ancient Venus figures found at places like Willendorf and Çatalhöyük.

What too few people know is that this matriarchal ideal is actually *the explicit foundation* of the dominant leftist, i.e. Marxist, view of history. The longhouse ideal isn't just an unfavourable comparison that BAP has decided to make: it's actually central to the way that Marxists, from the very beginning (and by that I mean, Marx and Engels themselves), have seen the nature and development of human societies. The importance of this observation alone should be clear enough, I hope. But what's also important to know is that the matriarchal ideal is an illusion, a projection of bad scholarship and wishful thinking. And this is precisely what the book *The Longhouse* would set out to demonstrate.

Marx and Engels were both avid readers of early anthropology. Although this work was central to Marx's conception of historical materialism, it fell to Engels, after Marx's death, to incorporate it explicitly into the Marxist framework. This he did with *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884). The book traces the emergence of class society out of a so-called primitive matriarchy, exactly like the one outlined above.

On Engels' reading of history, the emergence of class society was not just the overthrow of the egalitarian ideal, but also the beginning of the overthrow and ruin of women as a sex. Class society is, by its nature, patriarchal, since it depends on the man's control over the reproductive function of the woman. This is where monogamy and then private property, and later the state, emerge from. Here's Engels in his own words:

"The overthrow of mother right [i.e. matriarchy] was the *world-historical defeat of the female sex*. The man seized the reins in the house also, the woman was degraded, enthralled, the slave of the man's lust, a mere instrument for breeding children."

It's only with the eventual destruction of class society that women will once again be returned to their full dignity and released from their bondage to men. Communism will, quite literally, be a return to primitive matriarchy, a point that Engels explicitly makes and we should not forget.

Marx and Engels' main sources for their ideas about the evolution of class society from a primitive matriarchy were the work of Johann Jakob Bachofen, a Swiss jurist who proposed the notion of a matriarchal society based on "Mutterrecht" ("mother-right") as the second earliest stage in human cultural evo-

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Michael McFaul
@McFaul
I agree with @r_stefanchuk . Time for the United States and all other countries who want to do more than just identify the problem & do more about it. Designate Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism.
Ruslan Stefanchuk @r_stefanchuk · Mar 9
so-called "new" tactic is to launch another massive missile attack and fire everything it has in its arsenal at for hours. wishes haven't changed: it still wants to destroy the energy system and critical infrastructure.
Terrorists.
'll be sentenced as a terrorist state
7:03 AM · Mar 9, 2023 · 115.1K Views
"Everything I don't like is state-sponsored terrorism!"

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"Leftism is a monstrous falsification of the human spirit and history"

lution, and the work of Louis Henry Morgan, an American anthropologist who studied the longhouse-dwelling Iroquois Indians and based many of his own theories about cultural evolution in his book *Ancient Society* on Bachofen's work.

Even in Marx's day, these theories were far from universally accepted, and time has been far from kind to them. Now, no serious scholar would argue that the earliest stage of civilisation, or indeed any stage of civilisation, has been matriarchal, even if there obviously are societies where women are treated better (or indeed worse) and wield more (or less) power than they do in modern industrial society. Even the egalitarian aspirations of generations of twentieth-century anthropologists – perhaps the most libtarded and ideologically driven of all academic practitioners – have not been able to produce a convincing example of a truly egalitarian (i.e. "communist") primitive society, even among hunter-gatherers.

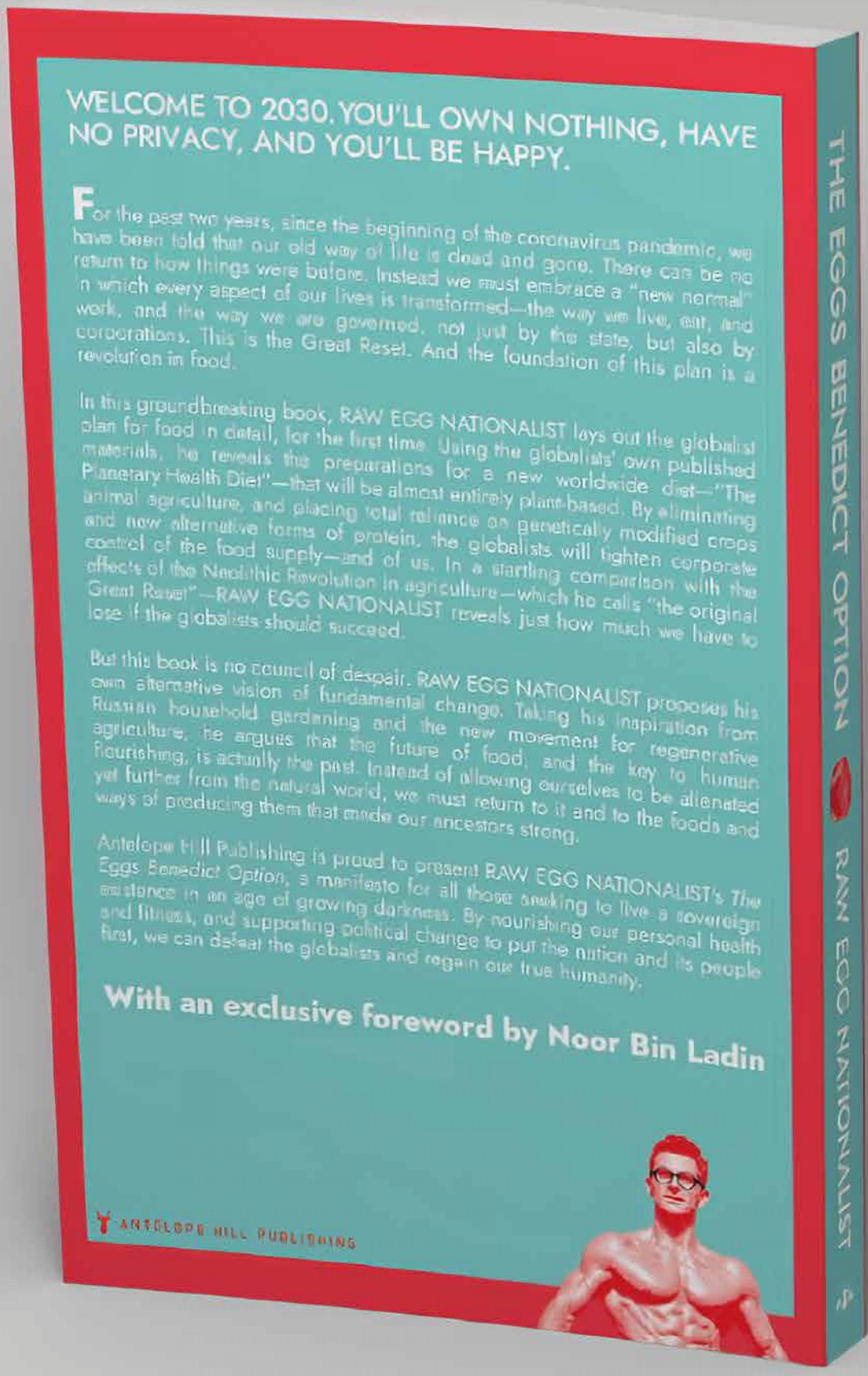
This hasn't stopped a kind of parallel scholarship from developing among people influenced by the work of Bachofen, Morgan, and Marx and Engels. Among its adherents we can count Carl Jung, Erich Fromm, Robert Graves, Joseph Campbell, Erich Neumann and Marija Gimbutas. Gimbutas, in particular, has been instrumental in prolonging the life of the theory of primitive matriarchy by developing further the theory of a primitive "mother goddess" cult in Neolithic Europe.

Earlier in her academic career, Gimbutas was the originator of the so-called "Kurgan hypothesis", that the ancient barrows of Bronze Age Europe were evidence of a great invasion of peoples – the Indo-Europeans – from barrow-making cultures on the Pontic-Caspian steppe, a theory that has been stunningly vindicated, in the fundamentals at least, by new genetic studies, despite being the academic equivalent of the Chernobyl elephant's foot. After moving to California in the 1970s, Gimbutas became involved with radical feminists who were interested in alternative spirituality that could replace the "patriarchal" Abrahamic religions, and soon, as historian Ronald Hutton puts it, her "own work… gradually mutated to serve the beliefs and ideals of this movement." Now we were shown a primitive matriarchal European society, centred on peaceful creativity and worshipping a single "great goddess", before the arrival of the violent patriarchal Indo-Europeans from the steppe. In truth, the notion of a pan-European nature goddess cult owes much more to ancient pagan (i.e. classical) and then medieval notions of a deity known as "mother nature" or "mother earth" than it does to an actually existing religion at the dawn of European history.

The TL;DR of all this is that what we know and feel intuitively – that leftism is a monstrous falsification of the human spirit and history – is true. The leftist egalitarian vision of a world free from hierarchy is rooted in fantasy and inversion, plain and simple. On the intellectual plane, we already know this from Nietzsche and *The Genealogy of Morals*, and an examination of primitive matriarchy and longhouse values – the foundation of the Marxist theory of historical materialism – only confirms this further.

The question is, though, whether simply exposing this is enough. Where does it get us? After all, leftism has succeeded spectacularly despite being based in an obvious lie. Leftism hasn't needed to be true to be successful, because it appeals not to any rational faculty, but to a particular manifestation of the will to power; as BAP puts it, to "a titanic hatred of the well-turned-out and beautiful". Marxism, and leftism more generally, will persist eternally in error, but that doesn't mean it won't be victorious.

So we need to do much more than just expose our opponents for what they are. New genealogies alone will not save us – but I still might write that book.


WELCOME TO 2030. YOU'LL OWN NOTHING, HAVE NO PRIVACY, AND YOU'LL BE HAPPY.
For the past two years, since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, we have been told that our old way of life is dead and gone. There can be no return to how things were before. Instead we must embrace a "new normal" in which every aspect of our lives is transformed—the way we live, eat, and work, and the way we are governed, not just by the state, but also by corporations. This is the Great Reset. And the foundation of this plan is a revolution in food.
In this groundbreaking book, RAW EGG NATIONALIST lays out the globalist plan for food in detail, for the first time. Using the globalists' own published materials, he reveals the preparations for a new worldwide diet—"The Planetary Health Diet"—that will be almost entirely plant-based. By eliminating animal agriculture, and placing total reliance on genetically modified crops and new alternative forms of protein, the globalists will tighten corporate control of the food supply—and of us. In a startling comparison with the effects of the Neolithic Revolution in agriculture—which he calls "the original Great Reset"—RAW EGG NATIONALIST reveals just how much we have to lose if the globalists should succeed.
But this book is no council of despair. RAW EGG NATIONALIST proposes his own alternative vision of fundamental change. Taking his inspiration from Russian household gardening and the new movement for regenerative agriculture, he argues that the future of food, and the key to human flourishing, is actually the past. Instead of allowing ourselves to be alienated yet further from the natural world, we must return to it and to the foods and ways of producing them that made our ancestors strong.
Antelope Hill Publishing is proud to present RAW EGG NATIONALIST's *The Eggs Benedict Option*, a manifesto for all those seeking to live a sovereign existence in an age of growing darkness. By nourishing our personal health and fitness, and supporting political change to put the nation and its people first, we can defeat the globalists and regain our true humanity.
With an exclusive foreword by Noor Bin Ladin
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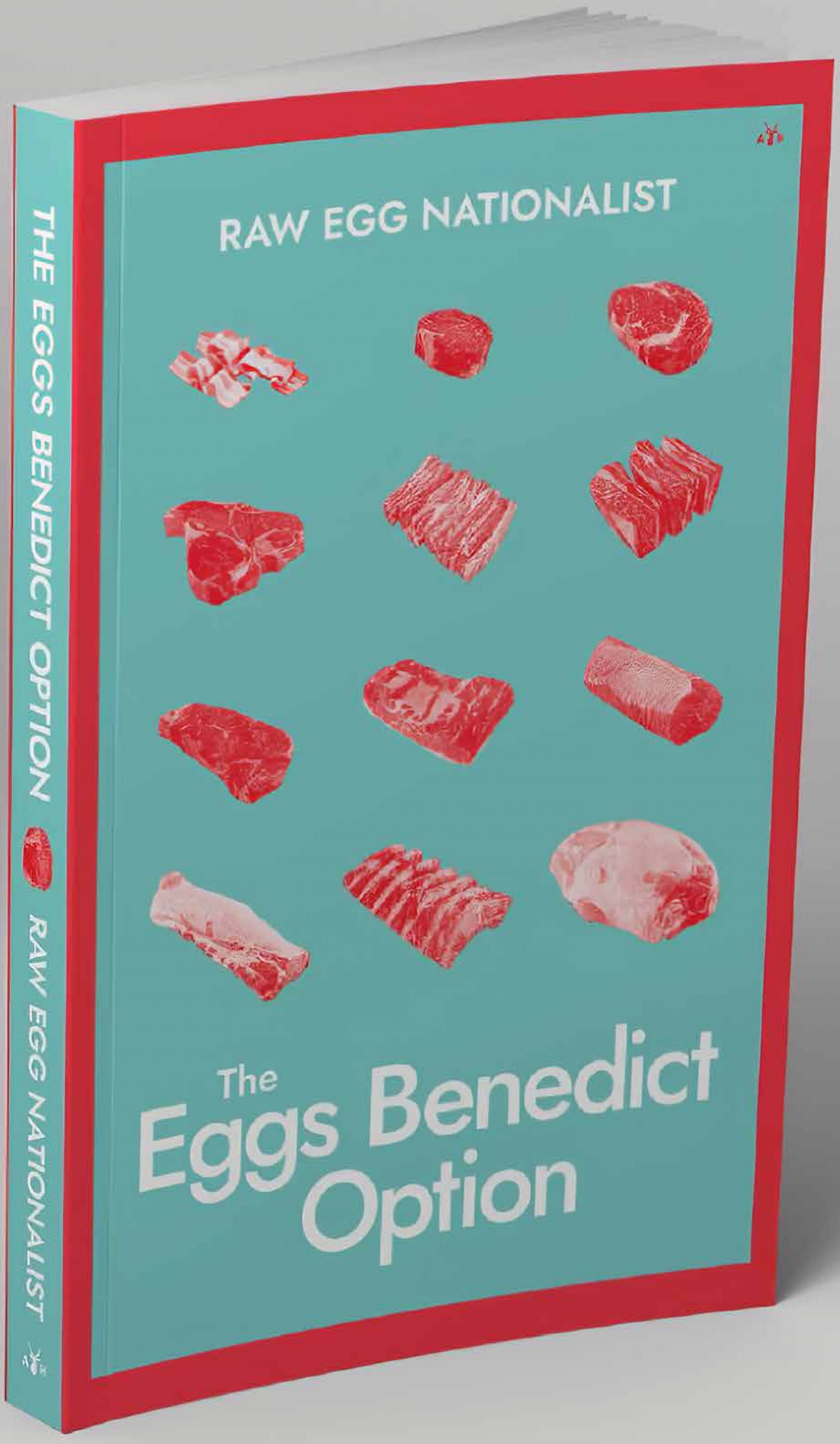
THE EGGS BENEDICT OPTION
RAW EGG NATIONALIST


THE EGGS BENEDICT OPTION
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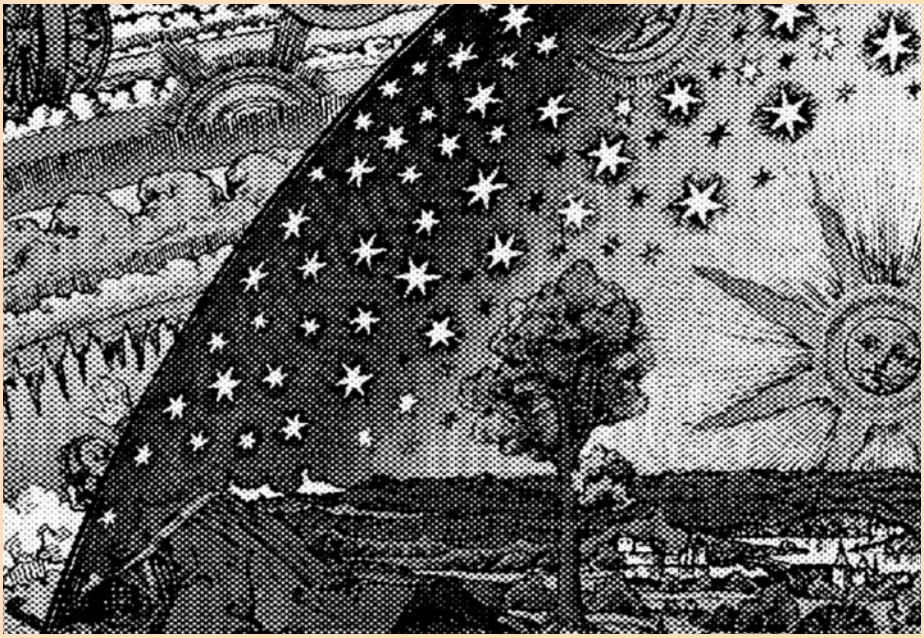
The Eggs Benedict Option

GONZO

"Gnosticism, schnosticism"



Anyone reading this knows that a leftist spouting off about fascism can always be safely ignored. The same has become true with conservatives in their use of Gnosticism. The term is perfection for the modern conservative: A pseudo-Christian term used by pseudo-intellectuals to bash pseudonymous posters online. It instantly outs its user as a mediocrity, and one who does not value his own beliefs (insofar that he has any) or the pursuit of knowledge as a good in itself.

Let's start at the beginning: Gnosis simply means knowledge. Gnosis is good. It is through knowledge that we understand our place in the world and understand our relationship to God. The pursuit and use of knowledge – what to call it but Gnosticism? – is therefore a commendable thing and absolutely necessary for the Christian pursuit of Truth and Wisdom, which are venerated throughout the Old and New Testaments.

"How is it, then, that this term 'Gnosticism' has become a source of opprobrium?"

How is it, then, that this term "Gnosticism" has become a source of opprobrium? Some insights from Bruno Berard's *A Metaphysics of the Christian Mystery: An Introduction to the Work of Jean Borella*:

- Christian antiquity is unaware of any term Gnosticism designating a vast yet poorly defined religious movement; St. Irenaeus, for example, denounces "gnosis with a false name," not gnosis itself.
- Likewise, "Gnosticism" identified as a single school of thought is unknown to the entirety of the medieval doctors and theologians.
- The word Gnosticism does not appear in any pejorative sense until the 17th Century, when it was used by Platonist Cambridge professor Henry More; it does not appear in French until 1842.
- There are no self-avowed Gnostics, nor any Gnostic school of thought marked by a clearly defined doctrinal corpus.
- No texts exist in the entire Catholic magisterium recording any condemnation

"Early Christians inveighed not against gnosis itself, but against false gnosis, which is simply another name for heresy"

of a heresy named gnosis or Gnosticism.

Gnosticism as a slur is a definitively modern thing. It was the creation of nineteenth century German academics and, as is true of so much Prussian jargon of the time, tends to confuse rather than illuminate the matters being investigated. Gnosticism served as a catch-all term for a variety of heresies that existed in the early Church, none of which individually or as a whole had anything to do with gnosis per se. Put simply, the term was nothing but a conjuring of the German intelligentsia. It speaks not to any extant group or creed in the early Church, but rather the German intelligentsia's slide into heterodoxy and intellectual vacuity.

Early Christians inveighed not against gnosis itself, but against false gnosis, which is simply another name for heresy. So much is clear to anyone who actually reads Irenaeus' Contra Haereses, or who takes orthodox Christianity seriously. Gnosticism cannot be bad per se any more than knowledge of God can be bad per se; it is only false knowledge that perverts the mind and deforms the soul. As such, the charge of Gnosticism cannot appeal to any serious Christian, because Christianity requires gnosis of God from its believers. Far from being an enemy of Gnosticism, Christianity is itself a Gnostic religion.

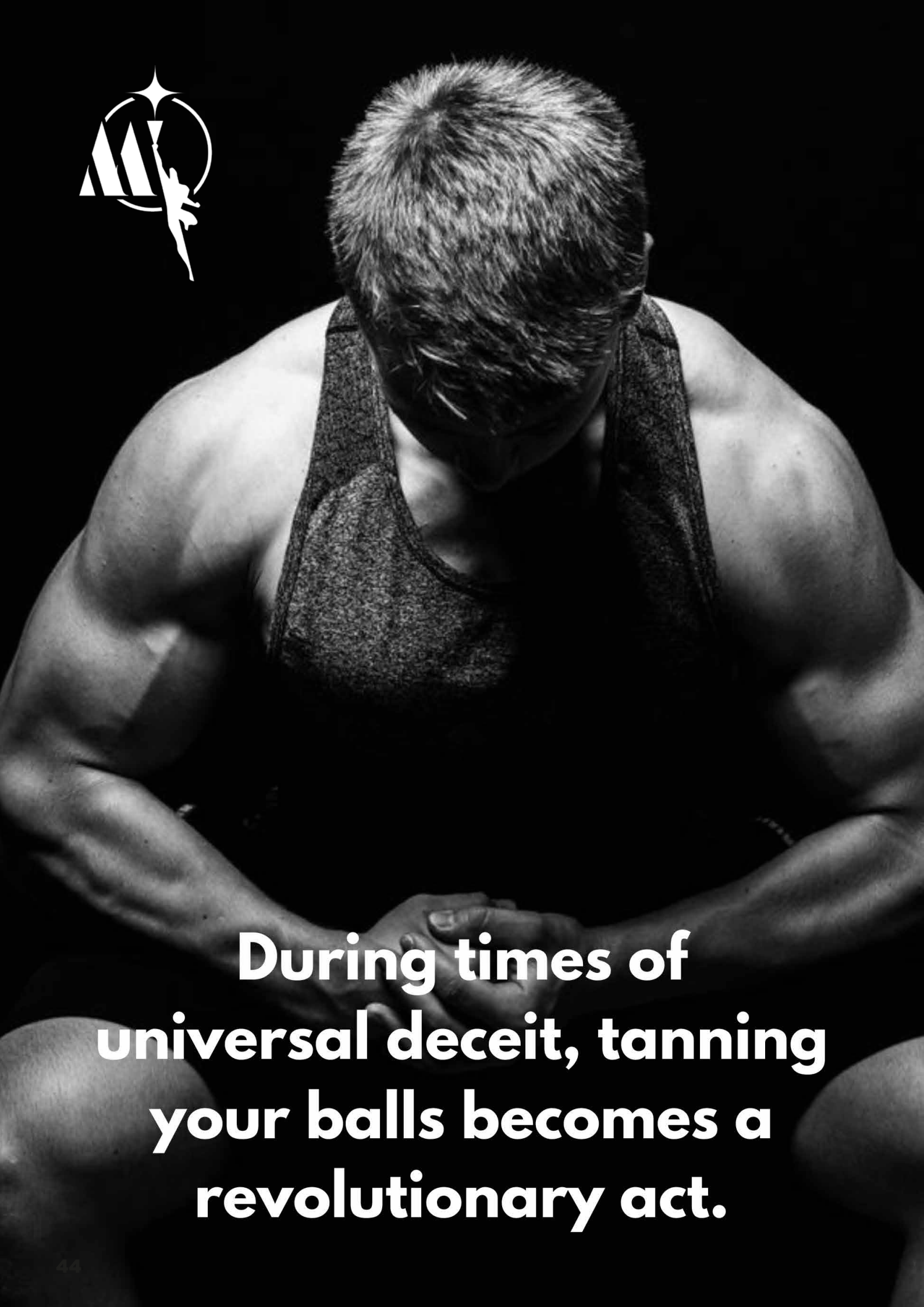
It isn't difficult to imagine we might be free of this bogus term if not for conservative political scientist Eric Voegelin, who made Gnosticism central to his political critiques. At best Voegelin's definition is hazy, at worst incoherent. Modern Voegelin scholars provide us with the following definition, one that roughly track's with Voegelin's own in *Politics, Science, and Gnosticism*:

For Voegelin, Gnosticism was primary a mind-set characterized that 1) man was not responsible for the evil he finds in himself, 2) he has a right to blame someone or something else, and 3) his salvation depends upon his own efforts to correct the flaws in reality. Dissatisfied with present reality, the modern Gnostic can confidently hope that with increased knowledge he will be able to transform the world into his own image.

Note that there is nothing here that could not be said about the orthodox Christian. The Christian too finds himself amongst evils he did not cause, evils that are blamable on his first ancestor and unseen armies of darkness, and his salvation depends on his efforts to correct the flaws of reality, namely through baptism and the practice of the Faith. If by Voegelin's own terms even the orthodox Christian is an enemy gnostic, then clearly the term is useless as an intellectual category, let alone one of opprobrium.

The more one is wrapped up in the knots of his analysis, the more one realizes that "Gnosticism" is simply any philosophy Voegelin doesn't like. The subjects of his disdain are Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche and Heidegger. From a Christian perspective, there is much to criticize in all these thinkers. But such criticism demands precision, for many of their trenchant complaints about modernity are felt and seen by the Christian as well. These men recognized that the "Western world lives in a period of nonessential existence." Yet instead of pursuing the roots of this feeling, Voegelin writes it off as another stage of Gnostic advance. The very fatuity of his Gnosticism prevents Voegelin from investigating the roots of this alienation.

So why use this empty and false term? And why its popularity among milquetoast conservatives? One explanation lies at the very heart of the conservative project and its relationship to the Enlightenment. Burke's conservativism was always an unsteady thing, because it accepted very many Enlightenment premises while inveighing against their necessary conclusions. Thus he could accept and


During times of
universal deceit, tanning
your balls becomes a
revolutionary act.

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laud the treasonous principles of 1688, but not those of 1789; he could pardon Locke while damning Rousseau.

The man decrying Gnosticism adheres to a nebulous Christianity, but not to orthodoxy (if he were orthodox, he would have no use for the term). He decries modern esoteric teaching and ideology, yet is curiously blind that modern esotericism is a product of the Enlightenment, not some trend that hearkens back to antiquity. It was, after all, Bacon, Galileo, and Descartes who posited that we cannot know the world without the use of instruments, models, and ultimately ideology. It was they who founded the creed of Scientism: What cannot be measured cannot be known. This was a great blight on the human race, one that placed the stewardship of humanity in the hands of experts and ideologues. But it has nothing to do with any ancient Gnostic heresy. If their gripe is esoteric knowledge, then certainly their gripe is not with ancient heresiarchs, but modern experts.

But more realistically, Gnosticism has stuck as a slur because it manages to be both pretentious and anti-intellectual, and therefore perfect for the temperament of the oily conservative. The term itself is impotent and meaningless — just think, of all the oily conservatives you have seen use the term, how many have made even the least attempt to define it?

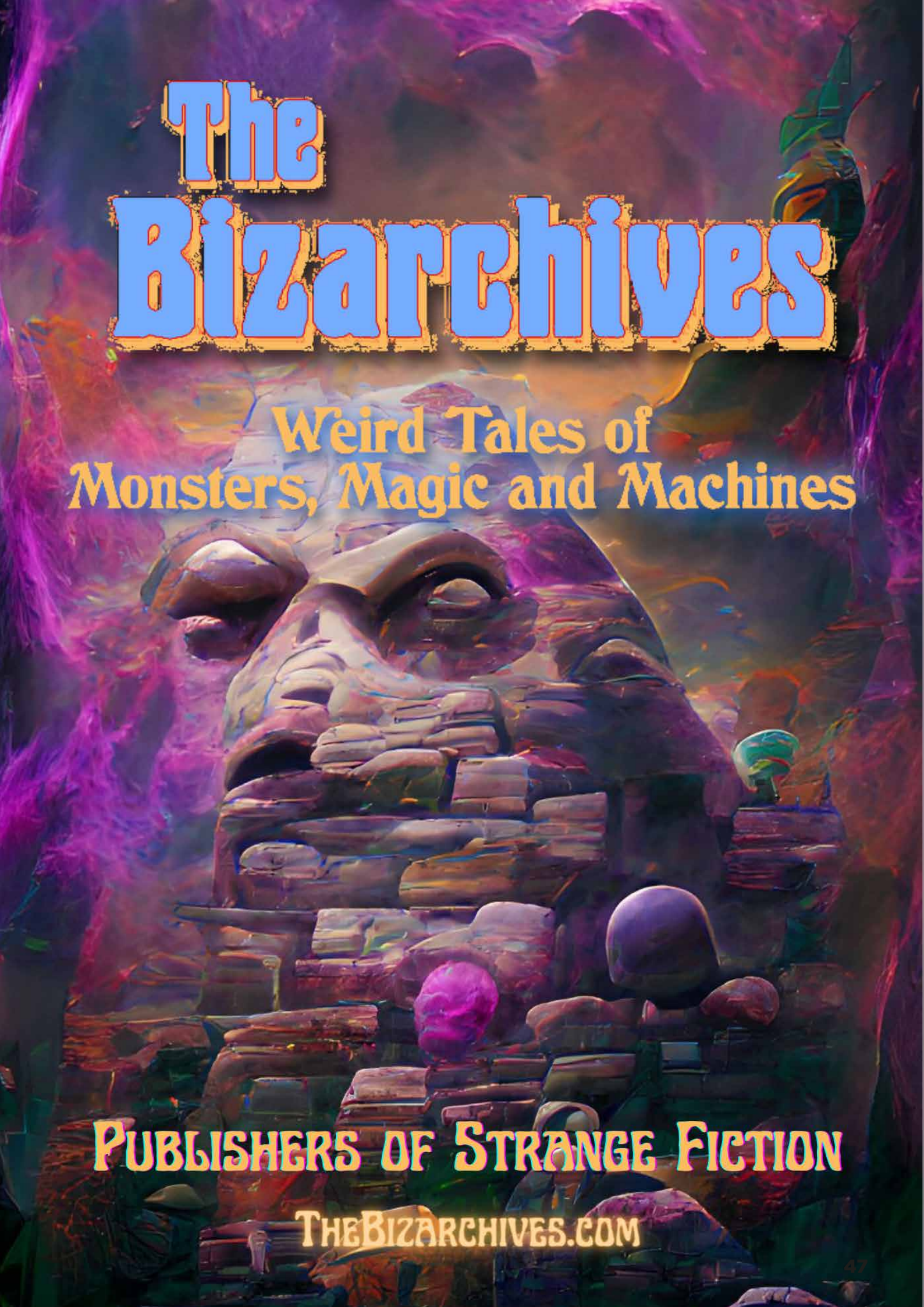
What is funny is that Gnosticism is leveled against weightlifters and practitioners of "bro science," as if the axiom "find out what's good for your body and do it" is a form of esoteric knowledge and practice. The exact opposite is true: Discovering for oneself the benefits of a diet or workout regimen is basic empiricism as has been practiced through the ages. Such practices are only esoteric if weighed against the full mass of technocratic life, and considered against the phony orthodoxy created through modern propaganda channels. The fat gormless conservative looks about and says, "I don't see the government or news media promoting physical health; therefore it must be esoteric."

All this speaks to the servility and stupidity of modern conservatives. However much they may decry the effects of expert rule and ideological propaganda, they still accept as legitimate their ability to set the tenor and tone of our discourse. When conservatives call someone a Gnostic, they are accusing that person of deviating from expert rule and, as such, from respectability. The slur has no intellectual content. One is tempted to say that they themselves are the true Gnostics: convinced as they are that the tenets of mid-century conservatism and multiculturalism will somehow result in civil peace — but again, the term is bunk and shouldn't be used at all.

There is only one appropriate response to the term: derogatory laughter. Whatever insights can be gained by the use of the term are obscured by its fatal incoherence. If you want to critique the modern world against ancient heresies, use an actual heresy. Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Albigensianism: all real and well-defined creeds that help explain the present age. The difference is that these heresies were real, not made up ex post facto like Gnosticism.

And reliance on Gnosticism can only be stultifying. Voegelin's intellectual blinders made him dismissive of the insights of men like Heidegger and Nietzsche, when in fact he should have appreciated the ways in which they were allies against the modern world. Rightists must return to the roots of things, not get trapped in a phony reality created by people who aren't really even on the right at all.

Gonzo tweets @r_greenhorn. Visit gonzoreduxblog.wordpress.com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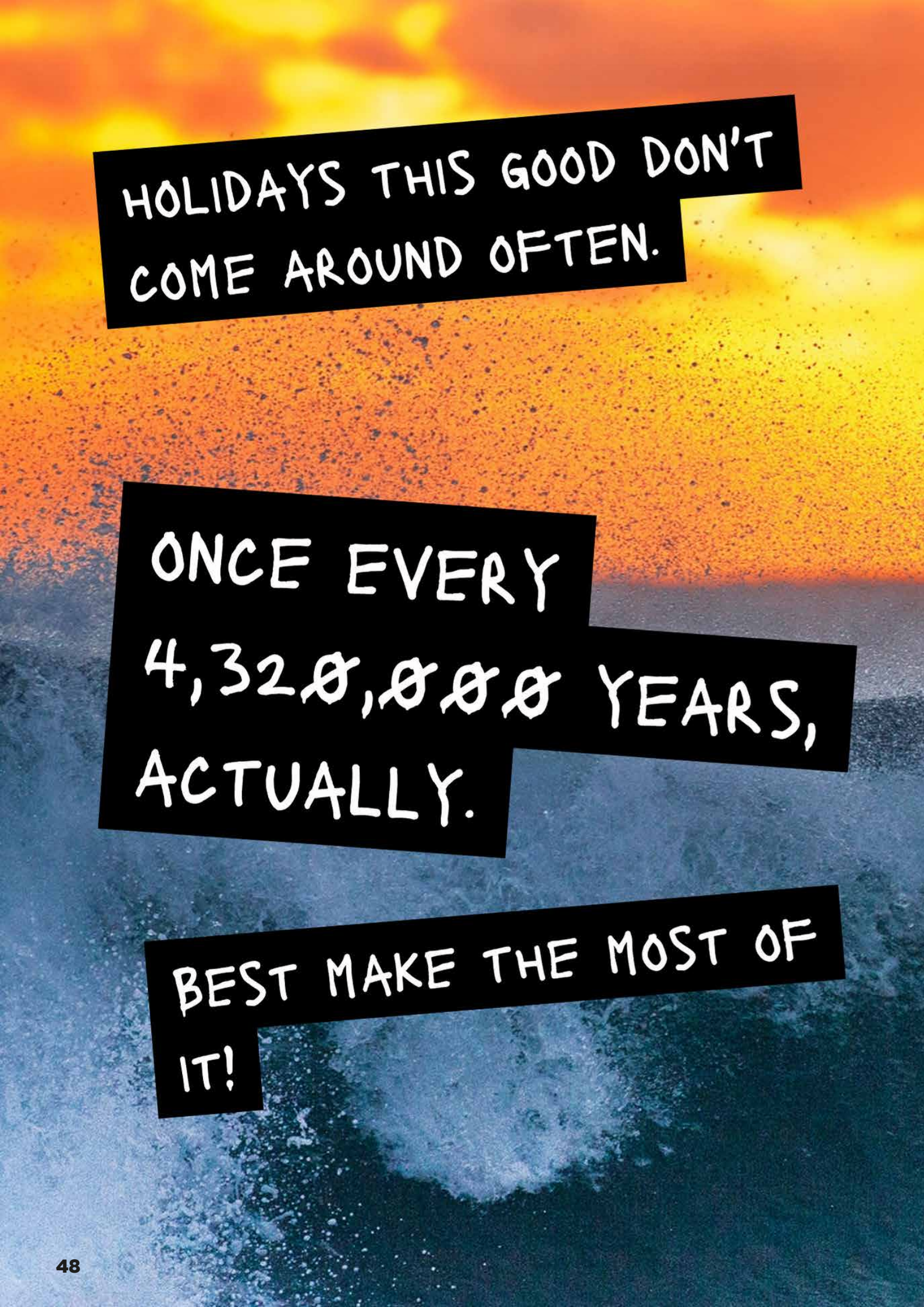
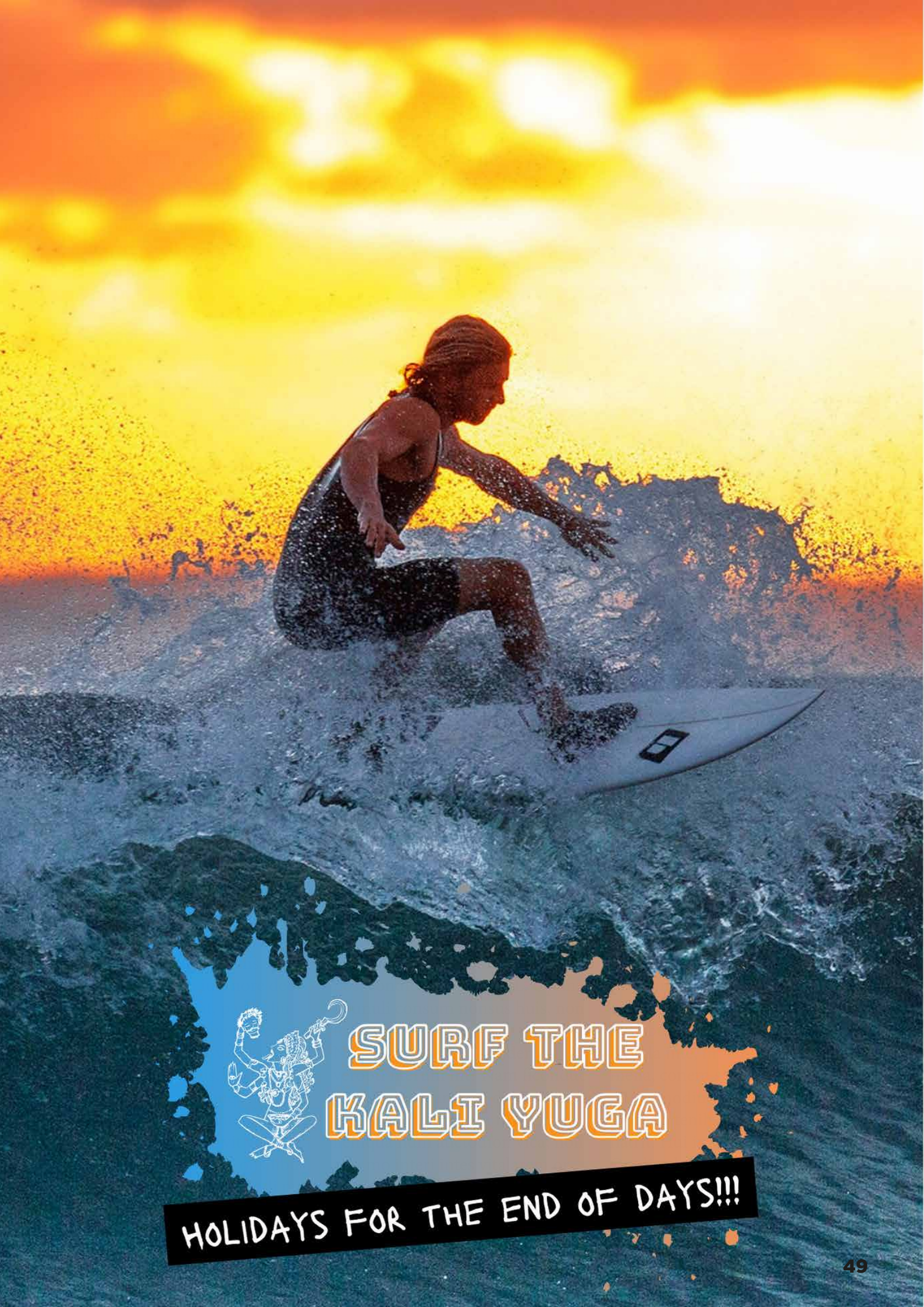

HOLIDAYS THIS GOOD DON'T COME AROUND OFTEN.
ONCE EVERY 4,320,000 YEARS, ACTUALLY.
BEST MAKE THE MOST OF IT!


SURF THE
KALI YUGA
HOLIDAYS FOR THE END OF DAYS!!!

PATRICK CASEY

"Is Food Political?"

Last October, I had some critical words for Raw Egg Nationalist. On a burner Twitter account – this was prior to my reinstatement, mind you – I wrote a thread in which I asked why the good REN doesn't discuss issues like immigration. I was concerned he was yet another e-book grifter, an aspiring health guru who saw in right-wing Twitter an opportunity to make a quick buck. Around this time I summarized these thoughts in a piece for *The American Sun*.

Had you told me then that just a few months later I would find myself penning a submission to Man's World, I would have laughed. Our first interaction, while not overtly hostile, wasn't exactly friendly. But when REN reached out and asked me to write an opinion piece for Issue Ten of his publication, I was more than happy to oblige.

While brainstorming a subject for this piece, I nixed a number of ideas in favor of revisiting my initial critique of REN. My concerns are long allayed, but I believe it is worthwhile to explore the issues underlying our disagreement – in particular, the question of what role, if any, issues like health, food, and fitness should play in a political subculture more commonly defined by concerns over civilizational issues, such as immigration. My position is that the two sets of issues are not mutually exclusive.

My initial critique of Raw Egg Nationalist stemmed from a desire to protect our part of Twitter, which I've actively participated in since 2015. Over the years, I've seen a number of grifters and bad actors come and go. Many correctly recognize that there is a certain magic to right-wing Twitter which isn't found anywhere else, and unfortunately such types often seek to harness this energy for ignoble purposes. I know many share my wariness in this regard.

For whatever reason, health is a field particularly plagued by grifting – and right-wing Twitter is no exception. I'm sure more than a few *MAN'S WORLD* readers will recall the saga of Seed Oil Disrespecter, a

"For whatever reason, health is a field particularly plagued by grifting – and right-wing Twitter is no exception"

"Ultimately, our mission is to ensure that we, the historic peoples of the West, retain sovereignty over the nations our ancestors created. That is the bare minimum"

guy with a Pepe avatar on Twitter whose entire brand, as you would expect with such a name, revolved around the evils of seed oils. It eventually came out that he was a vaccinated doctor and was promoting Zero Acre Farms, a company that sells oil produced by genetically modified yeast. Hardly an improvement over seed oils, if you ask me.

This sense of apprehension toward newcomers, particularly those with something to sell, is absolutely warranted. Such gatekeeping is necessary to maintaining the integrity of our space. But that doesn't mean it isn't occasionally misapplied. This is why when I first looked into REN shortly after his Tucker special, I held off on condemning him. Instead, I asked questions in good faith regarding his intentions and beliefs – questions which were satisfactorily answered, hence the writing of this article.

I first noticed that Raw Egg Nationalist hadn't discussed immigration much on Twitter. I asked publicly why that was the case. A number of his supporters, including a few friends of mine, were quick to point out that he does support immigration restriction, but that just isn't his main focus.

Fair enough. As I said previously, my intention was not to unfairly excoriate him, but to better understand him. Despite my general wariness when it comes to right-wing Twitter, I have never been one to purity-spiral over particular issues. Demanding that a right-wing figure tweet about immigration an arbitrary number of times would be absurd. But advocacy for open borders or disregard for the perils of demographic change would be unacceptable.

In the case of Raw Egg Nationalist, I came to realize that he is a man who holds the same core positions as most in the dissident right, such as opposition to unfettered Third World immigration. And I doubt the contents of a single Steve Sailer tweet would shock him. In fact, a few people sent me some of his tweets which were edgier than anything I post. Perhaps he should be the one calling me out!

But REN's niche isn't immigration, it's health (or food specifically), hence the aforementioned question of what role a seemingly less political issue like health should play in the dissident right. After all, the number of voices offering health advice on the internet, casually or professionally, is downright cacophonous. However, those willing to challenge woke orthodoxy on issues like race, immigration, democracy, and history are much fewer in number. Heterodox positions on these issues define the dissident right; without us, who would voice them?

We therefore have a unique role to play in the effort to save our civilization. Should we cease to advocate for these positions, this effort will be hamstrung, and our civilization will not be saved. Someone needs to tell it like it is, and that someone is us. With that said, we needn't limit ourselves to *only* discussing these core, defining issues.

There's considerable merit to having our side of Twitter cover other subjects: art, music, film, history, and, yes, health. There's also tons of accounts who are clearly right-wing, but prefer to keep it humorous and lighthearted. All of that is fine. If you want to win people to your cause, appealing to their interests is key. Simply focusing on immigration policy, and immigration policy alone, would kill what makes right-wing Twitter so captivating. Even our enemies can't look away, and we've seen many high profile leftists, such as the hosts of the Red Scare podcast, switch sides as a result. At the same time, were we to abandon the core issues, there would be no point in bringing people to our side, because "our side" would just be another part of the internet to talk about everything but what the regime has deemed off-limits.

THE ONE AND ONLY

MILK-

LY!

RAW MILK. THE ONE AND ONLY HEALTH DRINK.

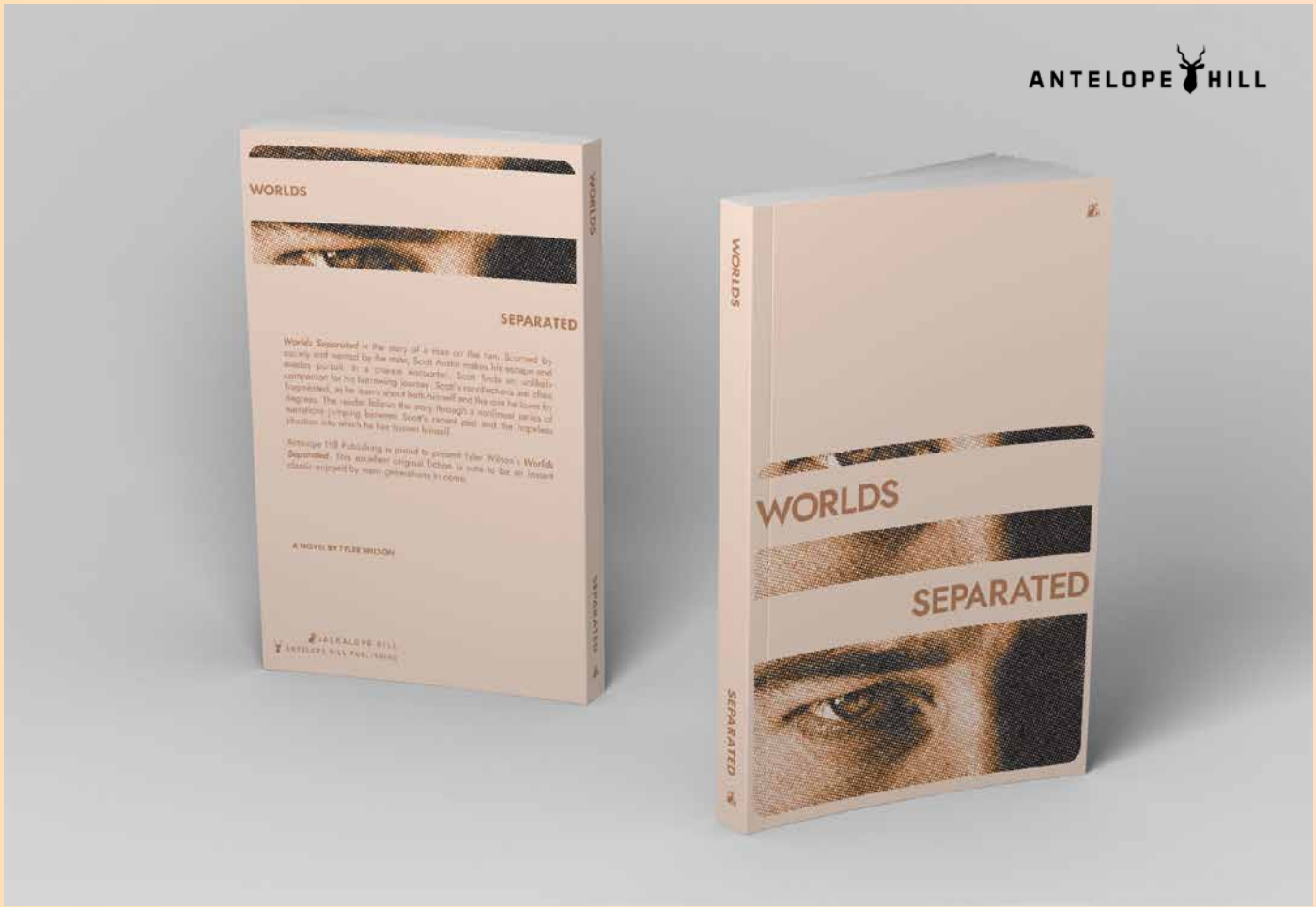
However, it would be incorrect to reduce health to the level of a mere political tool, one useful only for drawing the health-conscious toward civilizational politics. And although health is discussed by people of every conceivable political orientation, there are unique insights on the subject which are most commonly found in the dissident right.

Western man is undeniably undergoing a process of physical degradation. Testosterone levels continue to decline. People are getting fatter. Your life expectancy is lower than your grandfather's. People aren't reproducing. It's a mess. And a brief glance at what the so-called health experts have to offer reveals why dissident voices in the health arena are much needed.

Ultimately, our mission is to ensure that we, the historic peoples of the West, retain sovereignty over the nations our ancestors created. That is the bare minimum. But what good would it be for us to take back our countries, only for us to continue along in such a pitiful state? The restoration of Western civilization must entail the restoration of Western man as well. (I'm undecided as to which must come first, but it's a question worth pondering.)

Furthermore, health has another political dimension: the food supply. The globalists who rule over us are curiously interested in the food you eat. As to whether this can be chalked up to mere financial motives, sincere concern for the climate, or a desire to reduce us all to bug-eating peons, I will defer to REN. Regardless, this indicates that a complete understanding of our overlords' machinations must account for food.

At the end of the day, there's no reason why a political scene defined primarily (though not exclusively) by opposition to the Great Replacement cannot at the same time discuss other issues, health included. What matters is not losing sight of the former. Raw Egg Nationalist, contrary to my initial impression, does a fine job at striking such a balance. Others who hold our views, but wish to focus on issues other than the latest border numbers or crime data, would do well to follow his example.



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JOHN MAC GHLIONN

"The Rise of the Dirty Old Woman"

In *Platform*, an explosive, pornographic masterpiece, the author Michel Houellebecq presented readers with a rather intriguing theory. As an increasing number of women find success, conquering fields and professions traditionally occupied by men, their actions and behaviors would start to reflect those of men. In other words, the more successful women became, the more likely they were to act like men.

Some twenty years on from the book's release, the line separating men from women has never been blurrier. Some could argue that in an age where we must ask what a woman is, the line no longer exists. Monsieur Houellebecq, the filthy scoundrel, was absolutely right. After all, in 2023, women are just as likely as men to abuse alcohol and engage in acts of domestic violence. The same goes for tattoos. Men used to be the ones getting heavily inked. Today, however, women are just as likely, or even more likely, to be tattooed. The gender gap, as is clear to see, is closing – and fast. A cause for celebration? Absolutely not. Readers on both sides of the sex-assigned aisle should be horrified.

"The gender gap is closing — and fast"

But, some emotionally-charged readers will shout, "If men can get drunk, lash out, and cover their bodies in graffiti, why can't women do the very same?" In response, I could go down the path of men and women being completely different, biologically and psychologically, the fact that double standards, whether we like it or not, do exist, and that what is good for the goose is rarely, if ever, good for the gander. For now, however, I shall digress.

Let's talk about sex. More specifically, sexual exploitation, yet another area where the gender gap is disappearing.

Due to the decline of the nuclear family and the erosion of social norms, Houellebecq, the Nostradamus-like horndog, predicted that women would, in the not-so-distant future, be just as likely to pay for sex as men. Nonsense, some will say, the Frenchman is spouting utter garbage. After all, the solicitation of prostitutes is something men – and only men – excel at. Not anymore.

When you hear the words

"The Gambia is a country synonymous with very few, if any positive things"

"sex tourism", what images spring to mind? Maybe a spotty virgin taking a trip to Amsterdam for a naughty weekend, or a "dirty old man" frequenting questionable bars in the likes of Thailand and Cambodia. If so, it's time to retire such lazy gender stereotypes and acknowledge the rise of "dirty old woman."

Filthy Females

The Gambia is a small West African country known for its wildlife and national parks. The tiny nation has an abundance of monkeys, leopards, hippos, hyenas, exotic birds. and elderly white women. Yes, elderly white women. In October of last year, *The Sun*, a British tabloid that excels in the production of seedy content, published a piece on sex tourism in The Gambia, a nation that gained independence from the United Kingdom in the mid 60's.

The African nation now finds itself flooded with older women, most of them from the UK. In fact, things are so bad that *The Sun* decided to rename the country, "The Granbia", simply because it's the go-to-place for older women in search of "carefree sex". As the elderly women enjoy themselves, the locals recoil in horror, shocked by the fact that their country has become a sort of Tinder for sex-crazed geriatrics. The Gambia's tourism board isn't impressed either. "What we want is quality tourists. Tourists that come to enjoy the country and the culture, but not tourists that come just for sex", an exasperated Abubacarr Camara, the director of the Gambia Tourism Board, told The Sun.

When asked if she saw anything wrong with her desire to solicit the services of young Gambian men, a woman by the name of Barbara, 65, from Dartford, Kent, responded: "I don't know what all the fuss is about. I'm not doing anything illegal. If you go to somewhere like Thailand you see loads of old men with young girls, but no one talks about that," before adding that she "came here for a bit of fun" and that she's "not harming anyone."

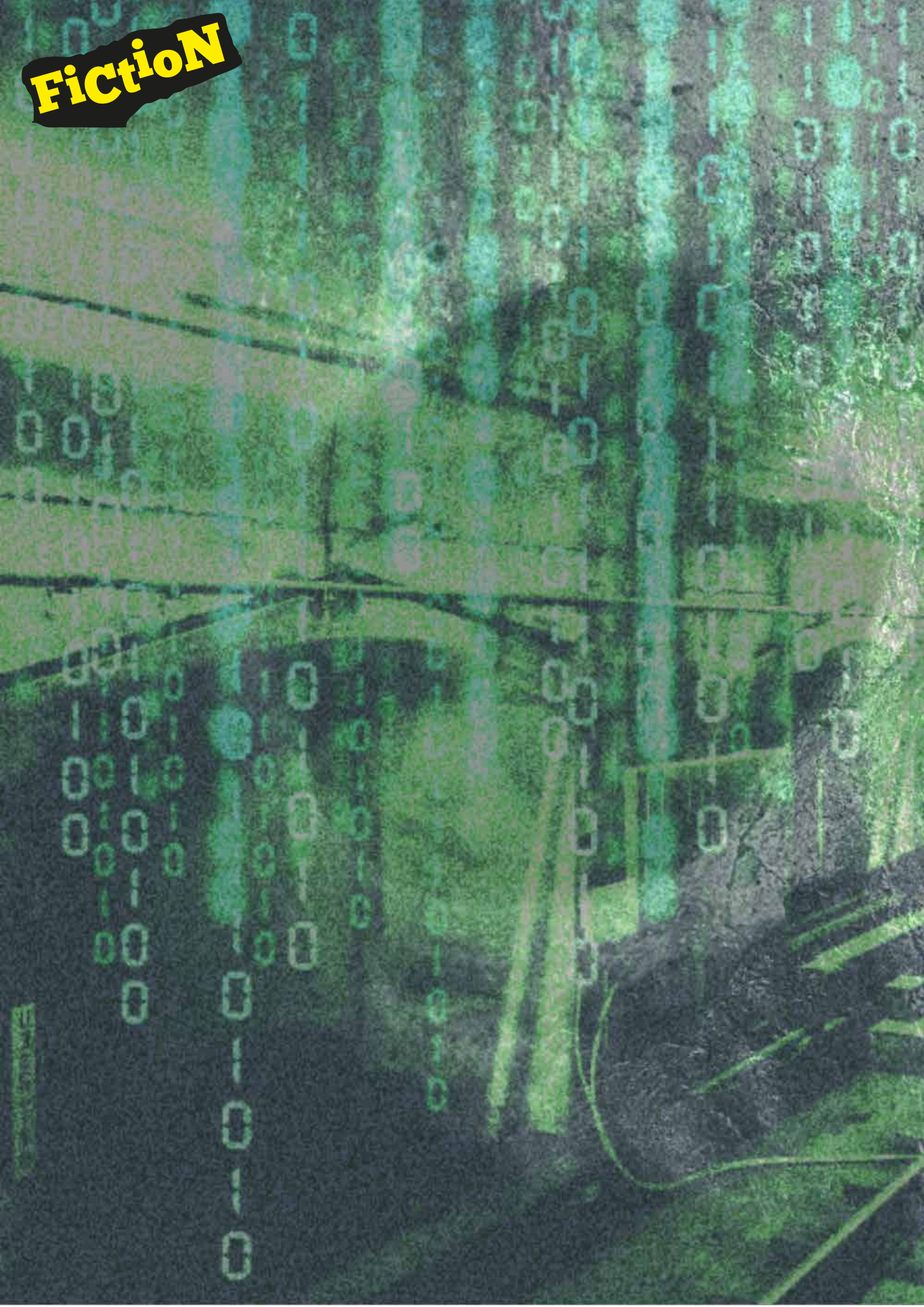
Yes, but Thailand, a country that I have visited and lived in, offers a lot more than cheap sex. It has great food, great weather, great beaches, and offers a very decent quality of life. Thailand attracts all kinds of tourists from around the world, not just horny men. The Gambia, on the other hand, is a country synonymous with very few, if any positive things. It's certainly not a country synonymous with tourism (except sex tourism, of course). When was the last time you heard someone say that they were flying to The Gambia for a few days' R&R? I mean no disrespect to the country, but this is a valid question that provides you with the answer: "absolutely never."

Could the desire to visit The Gambia have something to do with the country's ridiculously high rates of poverty and unemployment? Could it have anything to do with the fact that many young men, desperate and unable to find decent employment, sell their bodies to make a living?

The answer, I contend, is most definitely yes. This explains why Kenya and Senegal, The Gambia's next door neighbor, are also hot spots for vulture-like "girls" who just want to have fun. Like The Gambia, neither of these countries are exactly prime touristic destinations. Sex tourism is inextricably associated with exploitation, a fact that is not lost on the women flying thousands of miles to have sex with young, athletic men, many of whom are simply trying to make enough money to survive. For the majority of these women, short on sex appeal but flush with cash, such opportunities would rarely, if ever, present themselves at home. A sexagenarian in the likes of Liverpool and Manchester is going to find it incredibly difficult, if not impossible, to attract a young, mentally-sound, muscular man in his 20's.

Hence the reason why an increasing number of elderly women are traveling to countries where economic desperation reigns supreme.

Summer in the Greenland Coast c. Year 1000
Carl Rasmussen (1874), oil on canvas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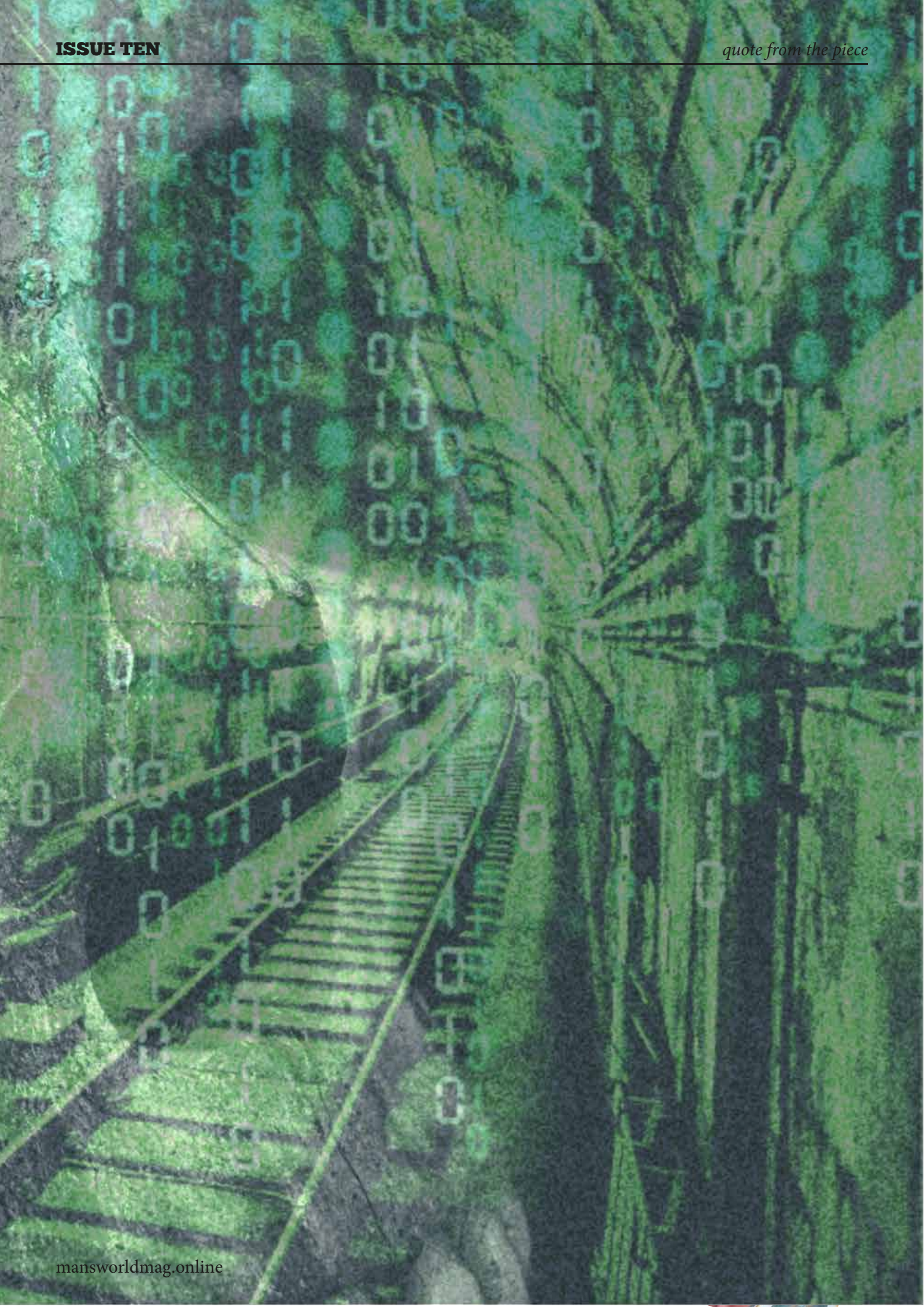

"Slavery never ended, this lady was in the fast lane to sizzle my balls. I'd be walking on my knees right now hadn't you arrived as a midnight guest."

I was sliding in and out of her on the first class long ticket the deepness of it the steepness of it she was calling for it all aboard the slick track tunnel that never hits the end unless you stop thinking of baseball. We both reached our destination sooner than the train stop. I was on my way to meet a specialist that Hogue and Malone had highly recommended for quiet infiltration and gentle neutralization when I ran into my old friend under me right now on the train ride over and we decided to catch up and reconnect our close relationship. She lurched suddenly and growned when she rolled off away from me. What's wrong? I asked her, what are you dead? It turned out she was. My mourning was fast and great as was my shock. Bang Thing, almost the last of The Inside Girls, either died of natural causes in the stabbin' cabin or far more nefarious calculations turned our homecoming from what only a moment ago was a reminder of our deep mutual respect for one another into an ugly scene of a cold steel beam on the winter jobsite.

My culpability in her death set me off into a sightless beastine rage after which I woke up in the cocktail carriage walking on my hands doing my absolute with my feet to funnel enough scotch up my throat to bash a bat of rebar to a horse's back. Bouncing off my

hands I became the horse when I crashed through the door out the train no thang running on all fours the rest of the way to my next meeting giving me enough fresh air to decide how serious the woman was whose apartment I had just come from stumbling into after being tripped by a dainty nude leg stuck out the doorway too eager to run her apologetic mouth by way of reconciliation. I should have pulled her pins off and beat her with them as I know better now the baggage that came along with the gliding she dispensed unmatching blowing.

On my way to the gun store to pick up a serious order of grenades I'd be using in the future to blow people to pieces, I stumbled upon the view of a bare body with legs in the doorway of an apartment ahead of me on the left. I tried to walk around them but they went long for a quick second and got in between my feet, tipping me over onto the sidewalk. Reaching for my heater in case bodies needed to be riddled with jokes only I would find funny, I found staring up at me a delightful creature that commenced inside me a throbbing wanting need to find out what she was all about that the ole' game of in and out would be indispensable at 3-D mapping the hinterland within that is to be my new abode for the next 30 minutes or so. Already I was bent back in half the wrong way cajoled smoothly entering the apartment wherein every room the bedroom, then shutting the door to prepare myself comfortably to make her my castle.

Heavy hands made my pants lead waders to the floor almost through the boards while I was still taking off my hat. Her mouth rolled over my hammer with such vacuum for a second I thought I was stabbed out through space, whatever that is, a hole in a starship, pointed in the direction of that which commands the most pull. I took a nearby phonebook to her head but those don't mean nothing to a blower at its best. The back and forth set a breakneck pace she'd soon need a roll cage for though I resolved right then to first stay on my feet and second not to be drained dry for the rest of the day as my business as always pressed harder than the ultimate sucking.

—Give it! she gasped in between her face railing and swimming the butterfly at The Y olympic size with one quick second to catch her breath.

—I appreciate the hospitality miss, but you're not stealing my vitamins.

A sudden knock at the door queued a prime opportunity to set her hair on fire with my lighter to whiplash bash her off the vacuum trance. I scampered in 6 inch steps with my pants at my ankles across the room and cold shouldered myself through the locked door, picked up the laden slack, and belt-tricked up leaving the thirsty boiler behind me unfilled as I rolled myself thus free into the outside fire. Thankfully I ran into Smitty during my fixing.

—What the Hell Chundoan, it sounded like somebody was cleaning a pond in there, I had to see for myself if you were hosing out granite.

—Slavery never ended, this lady was in the fast lane to sizzle my balls. I'd be walking on my knees right now hadn't you arrived as a midnight guest. That's all you in there Smitty, here, take my hat, the lights are off, go back in and catch the second half of that swinger. Hell on knees and one hole of a mouth, just be careful you don't get your bag blasted, balloon man.

—I'm on it. I'm in on it.

He ran back in quick as I was shutting the door, pants in a pile over his shoesies and ready to see the act through. The pool girl must have slimed something on my pump that somehow got in Bang Thing. A poisoned revenge for the next lady that I battered down. Revenge though? Anybody who's anybody knows women don't like women as men like men but this seemed a ludicrous timebomb for even the most jealous mistress among us. Anyway, I needed to get back on the train over to the museum to meet my contact and hope the crew don't recognize me, this was an impossible hope as we've all known each other for years for what seemed like thousands of years.

I could sense a female. Immediately gauging the push and pull of the near future mixing our proximity from that of relative distance to a closeness impossible to measure even by microscope. I took a look around to make sure I knew where I was. On orders to meet a woman who was also a member of The Inside Girls, the infamous team of hardcore operators, skilled in obtuse warfare and a fancy way of suppression specializing in quiet and comfortable neutralization at the Museum of the Mud and Filth of Scientism. I had come up to the entrance of the giant stupid cube ignoring the admissions fee as

it was not real to me. I ain't payin you, shit fool, I chuckled to the psycho looking guards who beckoned me in the knowing I was clearly a maniac bent on getting my fill of science for the day. The dim gallery was lined with periwinkle gold dance poles along easter camo walls. Hard on the eyes I wanted to doze is town. On the poles in frozen pose sordid glass remembrances of the science and scientist maniacs who rebuilt CRISPR which was and always has been used to design the test tube freak pharaohs that still plague the world today like no-cock roaches. Luckily each sculpture still retained the original's thought patterns and they heard me out while I jeered but I wondered if they consented to their destiny being smelted in half the justice of the next world.

I reverse flew out in a frenzy after I saw what was eyeballing the wall's atrocity and returned back in backwards. I was taking a gamble coming in hot but I needed to see if it would lead somewhere sliced. Hunched out on another tanic gamble, I lit 20 a-class cigarettes half-way through my now smokey b-line to the dark lady browsing to give her a taste of my irrefutable tone with a few happy slaps. She had something good about her and I wanted to see if I could jostle it out. Her skin was pitch black and I mean night. Her elevated attitude as I was sure would soon to be displayed did not disappoint one bit. I spun on my heels to face her. Deadpan smiles and tears of hidden delight were pouring down my face as rivers of sweet. Force though it may be by, must needs I scream to release my throttled mirth? What was bubbling up was true and inconvenient although deeply bidden in the Right World where everything serves to make The Laugh Hit Home. This got her attention. With a wild haste she spoke through her astonishment.

—I'm not black.

Not even God saw that one coming. I had to roll that snake off me before I chuckled and let it spit back at her.

—Excuse me miss?

I moved in with a swollen giggle-ridden face full of eyes closed casually as in a deep sleep.

—Oh, I didn't realize you had your eyes closed, she said.

—Pardon me mam, there is something in both of my eyes.

—What's wrong with your face?

—I just woke up.

—Are you okay?

—No. I whimpered.

She gave that some air as she considered clarifying the position of being one who looks such as she.

—There was an accident. They tried to make me invisible.

—Wow.

I was dead still needing to stifle a serious glee. She however hammered on.

—Are you high?

—Excuse me?

—I said are you high?

For a second I made myself forget the situation to squeeze out the rest of its zest. Time for the switcheroo before I forged onward for the gas.

—Am I high?

—Are you high? she repeated plainly.

I was starting to flip out now.

—Are you?

—Are you? she pressed.

—Yes but I've got lots of extra cigarettes and I'd like you to have a few while I sort out the agenda of this evening's business.

—Thank you. You must be the one who was foretold by Hogue and Malone.

—Here I am. Let's roll.

We strolled nice a bit to find someplace more private.

—Obviously you must be Nightmode, about whom some have quibbed "lights out to nightmares," very nice to meet you. I was instructed to smoke you out for a hasty and rich enlistment for a moderately dangerous situation on our hands.

Said operation comprised itself of one part infiltration, two parts recovery of a stolen item, and three parts master coffin maker. A lone island off the coast of some rathole resided a member of The Death Club who had let his guard down recently by stealing sex from someboby's wife. We had to get it back. Myself stood with Hogue and Malone, my employers general, back at the office building up a fast plan to wreak maximum havok.

—What must take from this scrub besides the light in his eyes? I had asked Hogue after laughing through the ultimate damage course we were preparing to lay upon this sweetboy's doorstep.

—The smile on his face, he replied through a giant grin. Still beats me how the man could speak without his lips touching. This indicated to me he was speaking from a place deep within

himself and he was real serious so I got my hat and coat on ready to make hast to continue sewing the necessary pieces to move forward with my usual wreckless disgression. On my way I passed by Malone who was grinning a burning grin that knew so much, he looked like he wanted to burn in Hell. On went I to the place of meeting.

—I'll do this job with you but first I gotta make sure you're on the level, Nightmode said and got to moving. She made that direct slide over the same way I was, automatic and greedy. Us both submitting to a divine movement that is a pathway executed in unison willfully feeding on red vibrations hot flash demanding an act in accordince to the natural law and machinery that governs this entire dimension where cunt is currancy. Nightmode dropped the sledge of night washing over me a drop the slam magnet nobody on Earth could stop. Slowly at first followed by quickness of anticipation I began testing her interior to see if she had what she took. The walls were closing in on me. As it turned out she was black on the side blacker even and it was not an unpleasant experience. Her all fours were all tens on her back laid bigtime flat on the floor doing angels without the snow. After a little bit of the thing I was coerced by force to stuff a sock in her mouth as I didn't need undue assassinations under my belt if security were alerted to the mayham playing out in the room beside them. It is well I didn't go too hasty with my hydrolics, hencewise you know how goes the geyser of completion that puts a man soon to bed. I still had it in me. My wits and energy were required to endergo rightly the upcoming jaunty operation and what was needed was the vitality to fashion and invitation those poor souls intent on resisting our swagger to their own private gas chamber, without the gas without the chamber, excepting the bullet kind.

—I'm on the level. Now get ready for action.

Night time on the island we treated the tares set upon us as lower than lobsters, exterminating them and depotheosizing them in the hopes that Hell would be filled by the time our own reckoning came. I killed the engine on our boat and we skated in when the moon was right as not to come back from all the shooting to find our way out was nowhere. She ran up ahead and danced up the two spotlights perched on towers in casual surveillance. There weren't as many people posted as I had assumed, must have been a holiday. It was good and dark and Night has a way of creeping up on you so it was easier for her to catch the men patrolling the compound off guard and put them to sleep smartly in the shadows. Me on the other hand went in trucking because I had to be loud. Those lights were the first to go on my list, the only task left on it now was kill. It didn't take long till the lights were off and men were asleep all around me by their posts, they looked like they had their minds blown by Nightmode's Tightness, a move that took no prisoners.

The break lasted only a second when I flew her unseen like she was made out of paper while flailing, a ragdoll over a fence towards men roused by the scuffling that lucky for us saw only two eyeballs rushing in on them out of thin air as she landed with a straddle around one man instantly rendering him robbed of his violent impulses by waves upon waves of soothing relaxo while the other man she kept occupied with the nimbly hands of a woman who knows how to stop a man in his tracks. She works fast and she works right, not the last pigging I saw that night.

Our spent hosts were never a match for a refined demonlian team such as ourselves so we ran forth through the gates into the penetrated compound that hid our target. Hallways of nobody and doors to nowhere because I knew at the end was the special room where our man could have still been sleeping his last sleep or if he was up should be tying a noose for himself, useless as I was willing to bring him back from the dead just to kill him again. A metal door signified the last line of defence on either side of which stood sleeping robots. Not even electronics could resist Nightmode's creaseless nubility.

I gave the door the special knock Malone had instructed and our man inside opened it quickly, hoping facing him would be the exact somebody who wasn't me. It was me though. He raised a revolver so I pulled him out and in the dance of it cleaved his shooting arm off with a downward chop of my hat followed by headbutt to his shoulder that detached the other arm holding daisies strangled in the fist, and flattened him on the ground with a refrigerator, now he'd been hit by a

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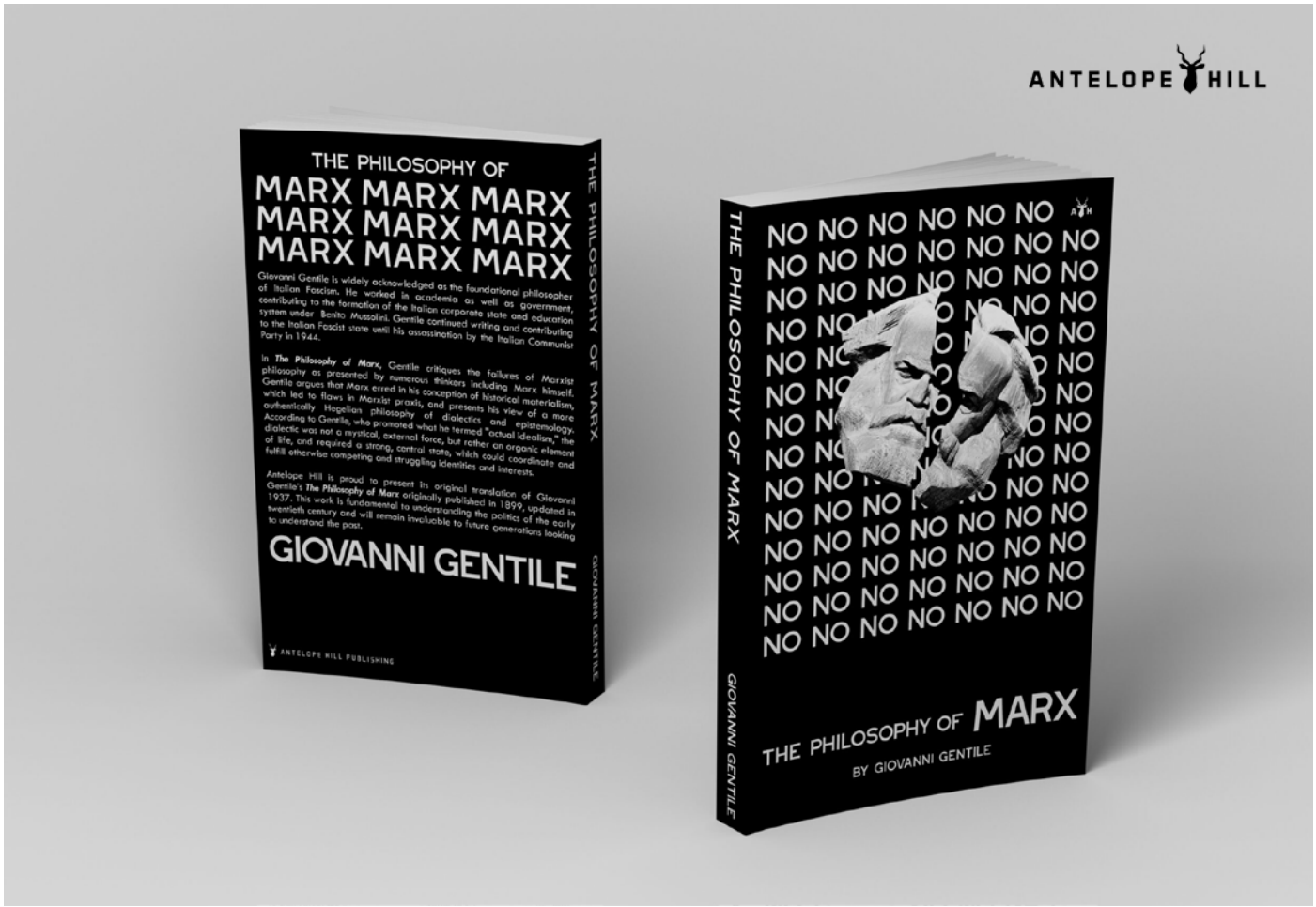
house. The sheer velocity of it enabled this dandy hat trick. If anything at all in the world flies at you fast enough it'll kill you. Though he didn't die yet. His eyes told me a hurried story of defiance which was rich because his body was useless except its faculties of expression while being on the beating end of a mean pummelling. He began puking.

—Get your act together Simpson, I'm gonna make you a mop! I yelled then I flipped him upside down and turned him into a mop with a rabid windmill. He needed to be better as a mop so I grabbed the nearest broom to skewer him, running him across the floor with easier management from the ridigity of his transformed mechanics. He tried to get some of his final spewing all over my new coat so habit took me to a place of pulling out the automatic already firing as I pulled it out of my holster blasting full Pussy Simpson with so much lead you could have used him as a pencil for writing its own obituary in permanent red ink.

—No more pussy for playboy, I told him.. Annihilation is his future now, I told myself.. I made sure this by dumping 50 grenades I had cooking down his drawers and dropkicking him back into his safe room and closing the door. I couldn't hear any explosions because Nightmode and I were laughing way too hard to notice anything but our realtime descent into hilarity and completion that called for a unique celebration on the boat shortly afterwards culminating into explosions of our own.

After I got back from the island to my own neck of the woods, I drove back over to the blower furnace to check if she gotten too involved with my business as was healthy for her. The sun was coming up now golden and bright on the East Side out beyond her apartment which was distinctly known to me as a place where sex happens. The lights were on and somebody was home. A somebody that better not have had anything sideshow to do with the untimely deletion of Bang Thing. I opened and shut the door, then walked through it, whipping off my belt smoking all the cigarettes in the world.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Giovanni Gentile is widely acknowledged as the foundational philosopher of Italian Fascism. He worked in academia as well as government, contributing to the formation of the Italian corporate state and education system under Benito Mussolini. Gentile continued writing and contributing to the Italian Fascist state until his assassination by the Italian Communist Party in 1944.
In The Philosophy of Marx, Gentile critiques the failures of Marxist philosophy as presented by numerous thinkers including Marx himself. Gentile argues that Marx erred in his conception of historical materialism, which led to flaws in Marxist praxis, and presents his view of a more authentically Hegelian philosophy of dialectics and epistemology. According to Gentile, who promoted what he termed "actual idealism," the dialectic was not a mystical, external force, but rather an organic element of life, and required a strong, central state, which could coordinate and fulfill otherwise competing and struggling identities and interests.
Antelope Hill is proud to present its original translation of Giovanni Gentile's The Philosophy of Marx originally published in 1899, updated in 1937. This work is fundamental to understanding the politics of the early twentieth century and will remain invaluable to future generations looking to understand the past.
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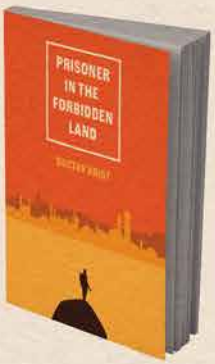

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PROMOTION

FAITH. FAMILY. FREEDOM.

Inside the new family business restoring America's vitality, one stomach at a time.

Words: company founder, Chris Buskirk Jr.

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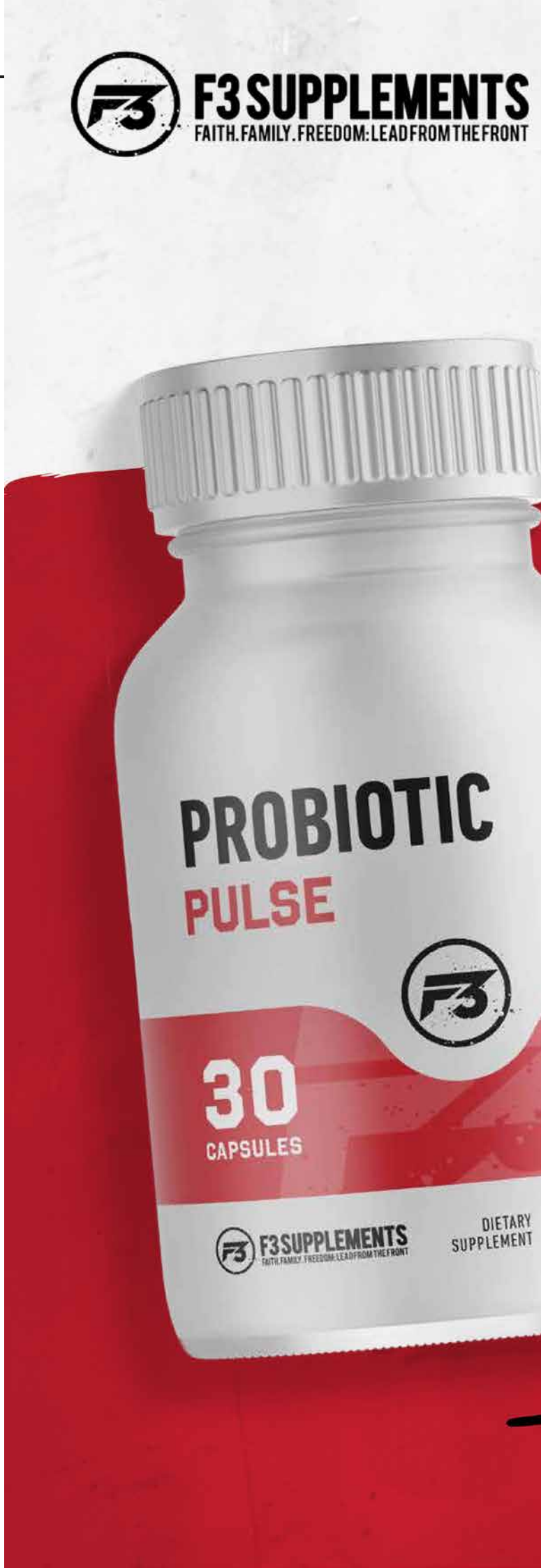
F3 SUPPLEMENTS
FAITH. FAMILY. FREEDOM: LEAD FROM THE FRONT

The United States is facing a health crisis that is almost entirely ignored despite threatening the lives and sapping the vitality of Americans day by day. Obesity has quickly risen to become the second leading cause of preventable death in America, with nearly 300,000 people dying each year. To go along with that, nearly 900,000 people die each year from heart disease, which is correlated with obesity, and another 1 in 3 Americans are suffering from metabolic syndrome. According to the CDC, 41.9% of American adults and 19.7% of American children are obese. By all measures these numbers are terrifying and they only increase as the years go on. It is truly ironic that the most formidable superpower in the world today is also the most obese and unhealthy country we have ever seen. Strength and vitality must be restored. This is why I decided to found my company, F3 Supplements, from my college apartment.

Ever since I was a young kid I've always been interested in having a strong body as well as a strong mind, though I didn't always know that was what I was striving to achieve. My first memory of this dates to when I was 7 or 8 years old. Back then, I was obsessed with basketball and was constantly looking for ways to improve my game both physically and mentally. It was an instinctual drive. I watched every video there was on shooting form and technique or different drills to jump higher, run faster, and react quicker. What I didn't know at the time, is that I could only go so far being a guy with good athletic ability but not enough height to dominate in competitive club hoops. Still, I wouldn't have cared: I loved doing it anyway.

I started to become more aware of what I was after when I watched videos on players' mindsets going to big games or walking through their thought process during big moments, in addition to the videos that coached skills and technique. I started to understand that there was a big mental aspect to the game. And whether it was a dribbling drill or a game winning shot, I was obsessed with the physical and mental aspect of becoming the best at something. It is this sport and this obsession that set the foundation for my health and fitness journey.

My basketball career ended as a high school junior when I realized that a Division 1 bid was not in the cards. That's when I turned my attention to lifting weights and to general fitness and physical health – to maintaining and optimizing my body. This is where my obsession for health and fitness really started to take shape. I had always been into working out and lifting weights ever since my father got me a weight set when I was about 11 years old. But I never had a real commercial gym to work out



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in once I outgrew the weight set.

This all changed when I finally convinced my family to get me a gym membership when I was around 15 years old. This couldn't have happened at a better time as my basketball career was starting to wind down and I needed another physical activity to fill that void. From there, I threw myself into lifting weights and even convinced my best friend – we've been friends since we were four – to ditch his other gym and join mine so we could start working out together. He was a little older and already had his driver's license, so every day after school he would pick me up and we would go hit the weights. This was probably the most fun I ever had working out. But, it didn't last forever, we both got older and had too much going on to continue this schedule. This was unfortunate but it allowed me to start exploring other areas of health on my own.

As I got older my thoughts and opinions on health, longevity, and well-being all began to mature as well. I started to realize that working out and having a strong, vital body was much more than just being able to lift the most weight in the gym, it had profound effects in every other area of my life. I also noticed this in my father, who started lifting weights again around the same time that we got our family membership. I came to the realization that physical fitness teaches us a lot of valuable lessons, things such as discipline, ambition, determination, and resilience. Working out and staying healthy became more mental than physical training. This idea started seriously shaping my world views and I began to see how physical and mental health are deeply intertwined. It also allowed me to see how many people in this world do not

understand this concept and that it must be taught and restored.

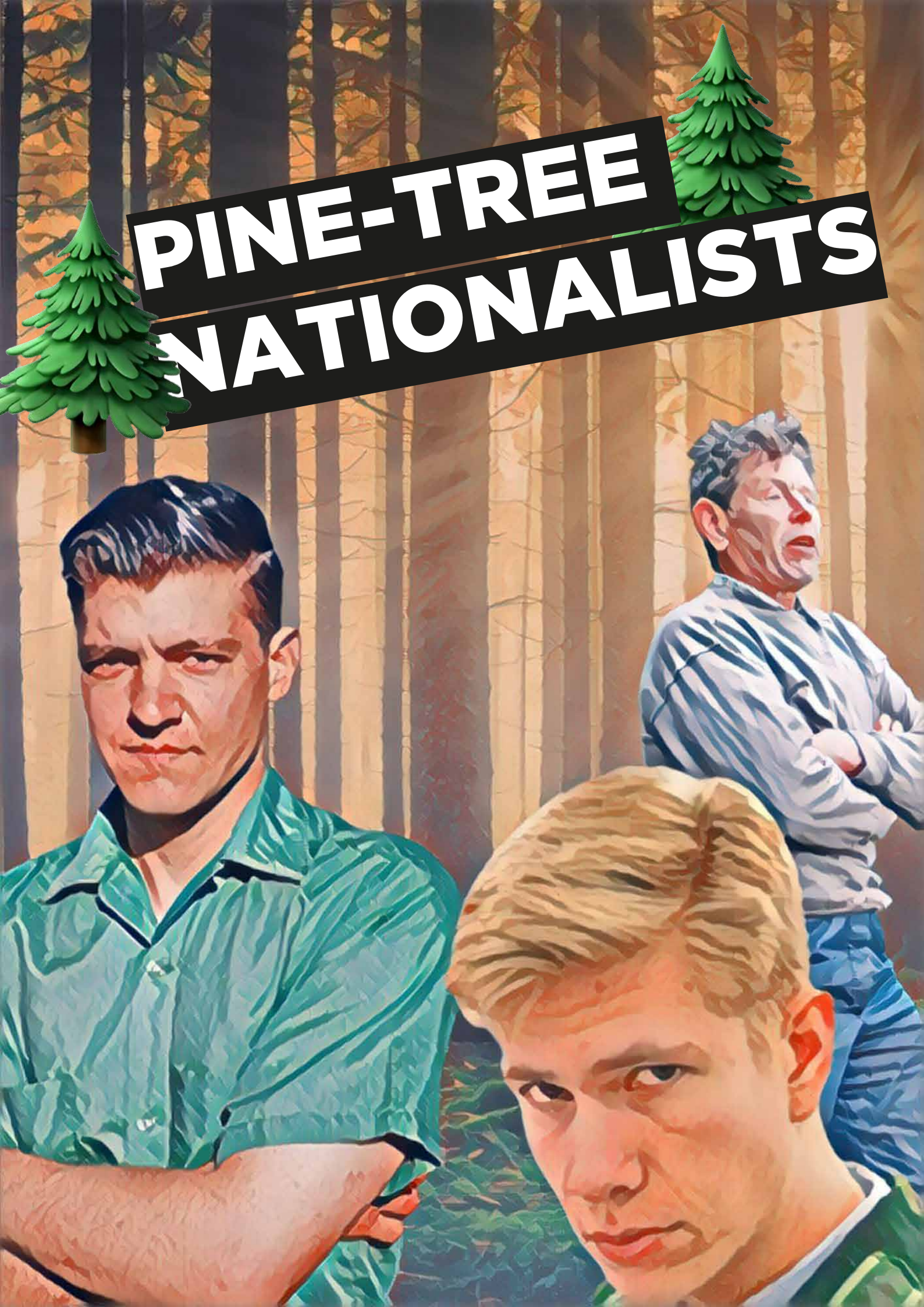
Since the halcyon days of Classical Greece, men have consciously understood the physical and spiritual benefits of a strong body. And not just for you either: the people around you benefit too. The Greeks realized strong, vital citizens are the necessary predicate for a strong, vital nation. And they worked to make this a reality in their own time. It seems that today we have lost that desire for strength and vitality that we once had as a species.

Today this idea of strength and vitality has never been more under attack from the forces that control this world. America has a serious health problem, and this is why I founded F3 Supplements: to restore strength and vitality to the American people and make us a strong, vibrant country once again.

We see doctors diagnosing everyone and their mother with depression and prescribing SSRIs which people are taking like candy. A study revealed that antidepressant prescriptions increased by 5.1% alone in 2021-2022, marking the sixth consecutive annual increase. The CDC did a similar study showing that in 2022, 1 in 10 women between the ages of 18-39 were taking SSRI's and that number increased to 1 in 5 with women aged 40-59.

A study conducted by British epidemiologists Debbie Lawlor and Stephen Hopker provides compelling evidence that this depressive problem can be combated by regular exercise rather than SSRIs. In the study, they took 850 individuals and used a BDI (Beck Depression Inventory) to measure outcome. This is an extensive self-reporting system that measures attitudes and symptoms characteristic of depression. The study showed a beneficial reduction of 7.3 points in the BDI report amongst patients once exercise was applied as a treatment. This evidence shows that natural remedies such as working out can have the greatest effects on our well-being and will lead to not only better physical health but better mental health as well.

F3 stands for Faith, Family, and Freedom: these are the values and ideas that my company is built on. F3 Supplements is on a mission to restore strength and vitality to the American people through high quality, all-natural, American made health supplements. Nothing happens without strong, serious, and concentrated action to make a change. F3 is here to take that action. But, being strong and vital is much more to us than just physical prowess. It means that you must be mentally sharp, high energy, driven, and ambitious. That energy and ambition will be essential to take back the country and world that we live in.


PINE-TREE
NATIONALISTS

Pine Tree Nationalists, also known as the Pines, Pine Tree Twitter, the Pine Tree Party, and so forth, are, in their words, "a community of people tired of living in industrial shit world who want to return to a more holistic way of life free from the cage and closer to nature by whatever means." Important figures in the movement include Ted Kaczynski, environmentalist Pentti Linkola, and author Mike Ma (who officially started the Pine Tree Party movement in 2017.) Pine Tree Nationalism draws from various iconographies including the American Revolution's Pine Tree flag and the pine tree emoji. Their form of environmentalism goes far beyond climate change denunciations: while the Pines are a disparate group of freemen, many of their views can be found in the mind of Linkola, who famously said "Everything we have developed over the last 100 years should be destroyed." He also advocated for massive population reduction and exhorted that "We still have a chance to be cruel. But if we are not cruel today, all is lost."

Pine Tree Nationalism appears to have peaked around 2018 — some of its former followers now claim the movement is dead, while vestigial pine-tree emojis can still be seen on many profiles. Unlike most of the nationalisms on this list, Pine Tree Nationalism has actually been named as a domestic security threat; its followers are far more likely to counsel people to grow their own food, sharpen their hunting skills, and return to nature. Jake Hanrahan wrote in *Wired* about the Pines and said that "the likelihood of a major neo-luddite terror attack remains pretty low…The idea that our interaction with technology has reached a crisis point, is spreading further than the pine tree fringe ideology though."

This is an excerpt from the Countere series on esoteric nationalisms, available at countere.com

"EVERYTHING WE HAVE DEVELOPED OVER THE LAST 100 YEARS SHOULD BE DESTROYED"

GENDER? I HARDLY KNOW 'ER

essay by JONAH HOWELL

The Man's World and Raw Egg Journal *audience is largely educated, whether by themselves or an institution, and will thus find themselves interacting with mostly educated women. Conflict ensues — a conflict with highly specific rules unspoken and unexplored by any philosopher of whom I know. I reproduce, then, in essay form, my responses in a conversation between my future wife and I on the subject of feminism, in hopes of elucidating some of those occult rules and the slippages they imply, replete with the implicit compromises necessary to make good of the conflict.*

1

Women often feel like they're fighting a losing, though righteous, battle for justice; men often feel like they can't defend themselves *or* express empathy without being labeled misogynists or ignorant or callous. In a talk already focused on gender, expressing traditionally feminine thought patterns often seems overly emotional or hysterical; expressing traditionally masculine thought patterns often seems patriarchal or threatening. So a talk about gender between a man and a woman degenerates into a simplistic "battle of the sexes" in which each fights for his or her "own side," like a boxer representing his corner, and each reduces to an impossible general man or woman and flattens the other into the opposite impossible generality.

2

It makes perfect sense that most such conversations go that way. Political thought in the West is haunted by the democratic idea of representation and, deeper in its history, by the faded specter of autocracy, and most assume that political speech bolsters one of the two. But when I'm talking to you, representative democracy is not present, nor is autocracy. I care what you think, so I will talk to you as you, not as the representative of "women"; but I also don't see our relationship as a power struggle, so I won't treat you as an aspiring despot if you disagree with me. Likewise, if you see otherwise, call me out. If I sense that you're talking to me as

"men," or as though I'm trying to get some kind of upper hand on you, I'll call you out. I wrinkle my nose when I'm listening to a song in which the supposedly romantic singer croons that he "needs a woman." I don't need a woman. I need you. I sneer the same way when a singer swears that his lover "saved him." I don't need saving. I need you.

3

In a democracy, political thought races toward its stupidest, most simplified form, because all concepts must be mangled into generalities that hold for millions of people. As an artist, I can't do that, because I want to tell stories, not fables. As a lover, I can't do that, because your opinion matters more to me than any number of millions of others. I am not looking for any universal truth or general solution to a universal problem when I'm talking to you. I'm looking to wrap my mind around yours as tightly as I can. No conversation between us is going to save the world, nor should it — that, to me, would be a lesser goal. The best it can do — the greatest aim it could possibly have — is to deepen our love while sharpening our understanding of the world in which we love. That's not the world at large, but the world of our experience.

4

I can't speak to the male experience: I can't erase my fellow men and their unique lives that way. I can guess at certain commonalities, based on conversations I've had with a small subset of men. If I ever go further than that, if I claim something is universal or certain, I've crossed over into the realm of faith. Some men, both feminists and meninists, feel themselves capable of making that leap of faith. I can respect it, although I feel that it would be irresponsible for me to follow them and leap, likewise, myself. If, though, they assert their faith as fact or moral imperative, I regard them with nothing but contempt.

5

Statistics follow the ideology of the statistician; no scholar can control for variables they can't see or refuse to see. Every scholar refuses to see certain variables — there is no person without an ethical sense, even if that ethical sense is pure self-absorption, and no one can see everything. That is, universal statements about either gender, even if based on "science" or "data," are the same, in my eyes, as fundamentalist frenzies over the "scientific" foundations of creationism. I can respect their ideas, even agree with them in specific cases; but if you're professing your faith, for God's sake don't tell me you're reciting an unarguable fact. The faith is more beautiful, anyway.

6

I don't kid myself into thinking that anyone else *should* believe, like me, that facts on that scale are impossible to know, or that any statement of fact on that scale is religion in disguise. If I did kid myself that way, I would have to admit total ignorance of the types of faith professed by the people around me. I see their faiths, and I can learn to love them, in the same way I can love someone's prayers to Freya without wanting to pray to her myself.

7

Further: Facts on that scale are impossible to know, because they're impossible to experience; and acting on supposed "facts" at societal scale removes any possibility of predicting the outcomes, at societal scale, of those actions. There may be meninist concepts that, when enacted, actually improve life for most women, at the expense of men; there may be feminist concepts that, enacted, will improve life for most men, at women's expense. When I read any political platform, I see a veil cast over a neon sign that flashes, "I am so terrified of the future's uncertainty that I need to convince other people that I *can* see the future, and if enough of us agree that we can see it, and we can act into it, then that makes it so." Hyperstition.

8

Once more, I can respect and even admire that collective world-building, that hyperstition — but I can't convince myself that it actually shapes the world, except for believers. So yes, I also hold ideas of this type, things I can't know but which I want to act into existence — but I'm trying to root them out, because no matter how successfully I act something into reality *to my own senses*, I can't predict how it will clash with the unknowable, unknowably complex realities that surround mine. (I call this "epistemic maturity,"

"In a democracy, political thought races toward its stupidest, most simplified form, because all concepts must be mangled into generalities that hold for millions of people"

not "relativism.") But we, by merging our senses and our worlds in love, can learn to build new realities with twice the scale we could access before. What's an idea at that scale — not the individual or the collective but the dual? I'm learning as I write, and I know it's a lifetime of finding out.

9

The danger of gender talk, or really any political conversation between couples, as I see it, is rooted in two things: First, that the two will trip up and start treating each other like representatives of general categories, and they'll become invisible to each other and reenact what each imagines as the historical conflict between those categories. Second, that, in a world in which we can interact with millions of people simultaneously, in seconds, friendship and dating are conventionally reduced to lists of pros and cons, red flags and green, like hiring metrics. Someone must identify as feminist, or traditionalist, or anti-racist, or anti-vax, or whatever, to be a suitable partner. Once more, all I see in this is an assumption that we can know more than we can. Knowing you call yourself "feminist" doesn't tell me anything definite about you. Political categories generally give nothing but a rough indication of somebody's social class or level of education.

10

In the South, I knew a few women who had ideas about gender similar to yours who would never have called themselves "feminists" — that word meant Yankee, or liberal, or city-slicker, all of which are the same. Does that mean they weren't feminists? Depends on our definition, and everyone loads words with meanings specific to their own lives. Now we can fill words with definitions that transcend both our lives and spring from our love — but those words will not mean what they mean in other public or private discourses. They're ours. The most common and most severe linguistic mistake I see on a regular basis: People assume that there is an "English language," in which each word ties neatly to an object or idea or a set of objects or ideas, and it ties to that same thing or set of things for everyone who speaks "English." But really, every word for me ties to the things I've seen that word used for, and those might be totally different from how that word stands in your mind. So we negotiate those overlaid labyrinths, wrap the words around each other to create a third…what do you call that? A love language? "My love language is cognitive merging to the point of singulo-plurality." It really rolls off the tongue. Self-help book forthcoming.

11

The conversation reaches a fruitful end when the languages merge, and we understand that we were, from the beginning, "on the same page," yet again, in terms of our own experiences, but that we only disagreed in terms of our projections of ourselves onto scales we can't know. Then we've really figured something out, really solved something. Not about how the world or politics or gender works, but about how we work — which is, after all, the only thing we can figure out. If either of us was a politician, or we held some position of institutional power, we'd be forced to think differently, to inhabit the position, full of tragic hubris, of the individual who must think like a state or a species or a gender. But neither of us is a state or a species or a gender, and so we have the liberty of thinking with more responsibility than that, with more care, with more rigor. And so we aren't doomed to the Sisyphean task of those who have to think in such generalities, condemned to answer questions whose basic parameters operate on scales they can't know, and who have to rely on gross probability to make decisions they pray — precisely *pray*, and to what? — will operate according to plan.

I WILL N THE TUMO

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12

No, a map is never the same as the land it maps. I can tell Iowa to grow canyons on its rectangular edges as many times as I want, but no matter how many guns I point at it, those canyons won't grow. Even if we assume that I'm a state with total control, I can tell gender as forcefully as I want that it should take a certain shape, with certain dynamics, and it will still carry on its course, because no matter how many variables I measure, no matter how precisely I think I have controlled it, there are always variables I can't or won't see. A political force can only control factors that people recognize, and we can't recognize all factors. New ones emerge and die, die and emerge at all times.

13

Thus the artist's job: To be, as faithfully as we can be, the divine conduit that leads the unsayable into the realm of the sayable. That moment of recognition is beautiful, is miraculous. It is also the artist's greatest service to politics. But the artist is free to say what the politician can't: The realm of the unsayable is inexhaustible.

14

There is always another unknown factor. No matter how much we think we can model and predict, those operations remain hubristic. The monarch doesn't control everything within his domain; he just commands the biggest hyperstitional group, with all the limitations of the others. If we say that political or economic power, or Power with an uppercase "P," erects barriers between the possible and the impossible, let's also say that those barriers remain permeable, because they can only stop threats they recognize as such, and they can't recognize everything.

15

What this conversation achieves, in the end: We know, a little better than before, the patterns and laws that govern the movement of thoughts on each other's inner highways. Valuable on its own, more than all the world that might be saved — and, unlike the latter abstraction, actionable. There is a humility that must accompany any thought of a wider politic: If I want to change the world, the most I can do is to change my own life in accordance with the world I want; and if I change with enough force and charisma, my change becomes proportionally virulent. I can shout "Equality!," or I can live in a way so vital, so full of energy and love, that it infects its witnesses with incurable desire — and only one of these affects my world in a way that accords with the scale I can know, the scale at which I live.

16

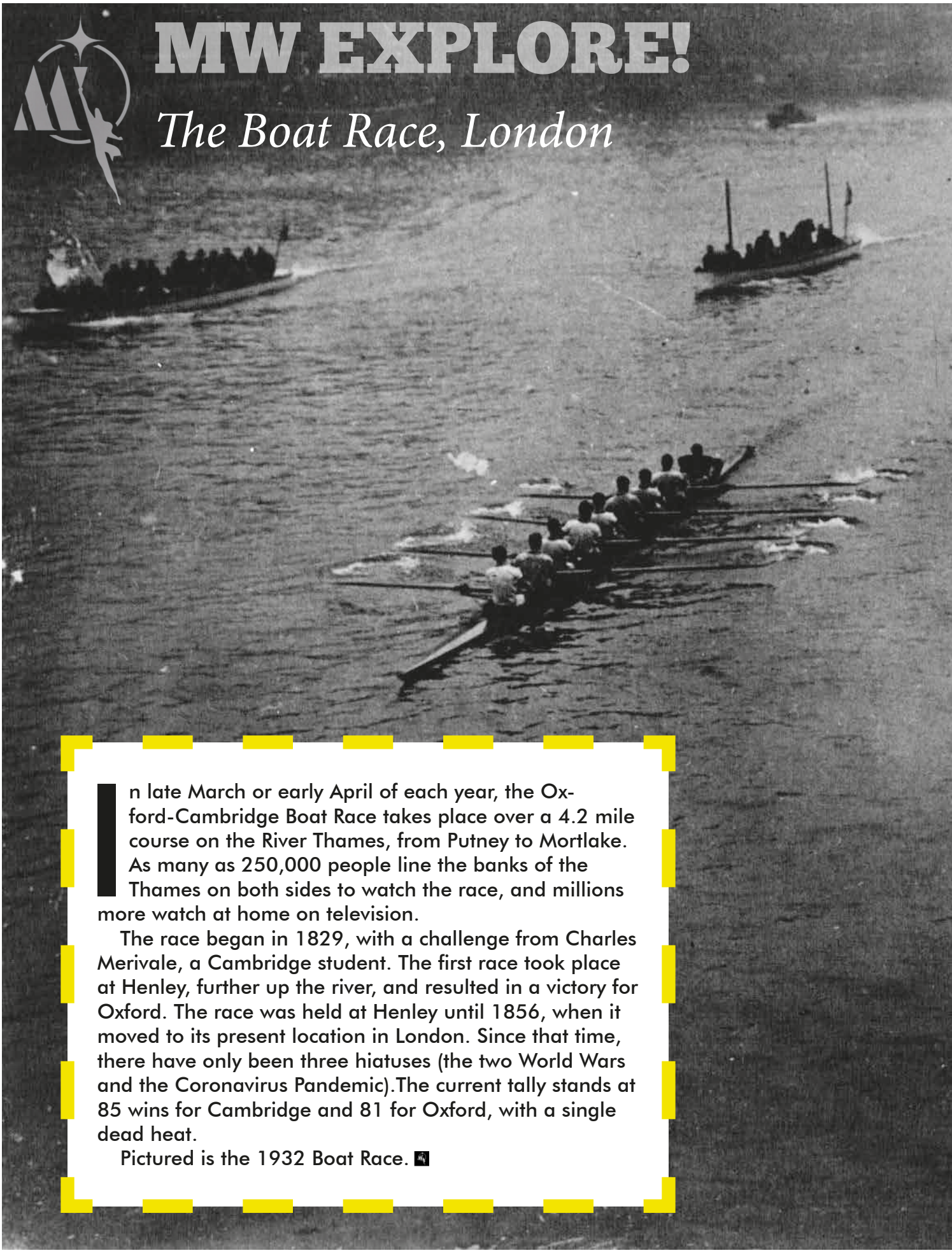
Now we're getting to the outro. Postscripts. Fizzles. Nearly everyone with whom I speak thinks that they've got to "hold positions" at societal scale, and they think other people will judge them if they don't, like they're lukewarm in a world that only recognizes hot and cold. And they're right, if they've got bad friends. So, so often, I talk to people and think, "You just need a good friend, one who can see you without seeing the ideological shrouds that have smothered you for so long you've learned to breathe through them, so that you don't even realize they're there anymore." A mouthful. Naturally, in these talks, I zone out a bit, seem distant, and the person walks away before I can say anything. As is only fitting.

17

This has to end at 17, naturally. That, on its own, is a demonstration of the dual — not individual or collective — language I wrote about earlier. You see what I mean? If you don't, all my thoughts' rigor and rhetorical flourish and literary style comes to nothing, and 17 is 0, and I'll start again, knowing that I, not you, have failed. Oh, there's the most important postscript. It's underwritten everything else: A misunderstanding is the speaker's fault, not the listener's. I, as speaker, bear responsibility for seeing my listener so thoroughly, so lovingly, that I will speak in a language that makes sense in your head, even if it compromises on rules that I place on my own internal speech. The point is not fidelity to some personal ethic of speech or philosophy, but communication, but merging — to wrap our internal languages around each other so tenderly that each dialect learns to love the other as I love you, despite the differences imposed on each by wider politics.

MW EXPLORE!

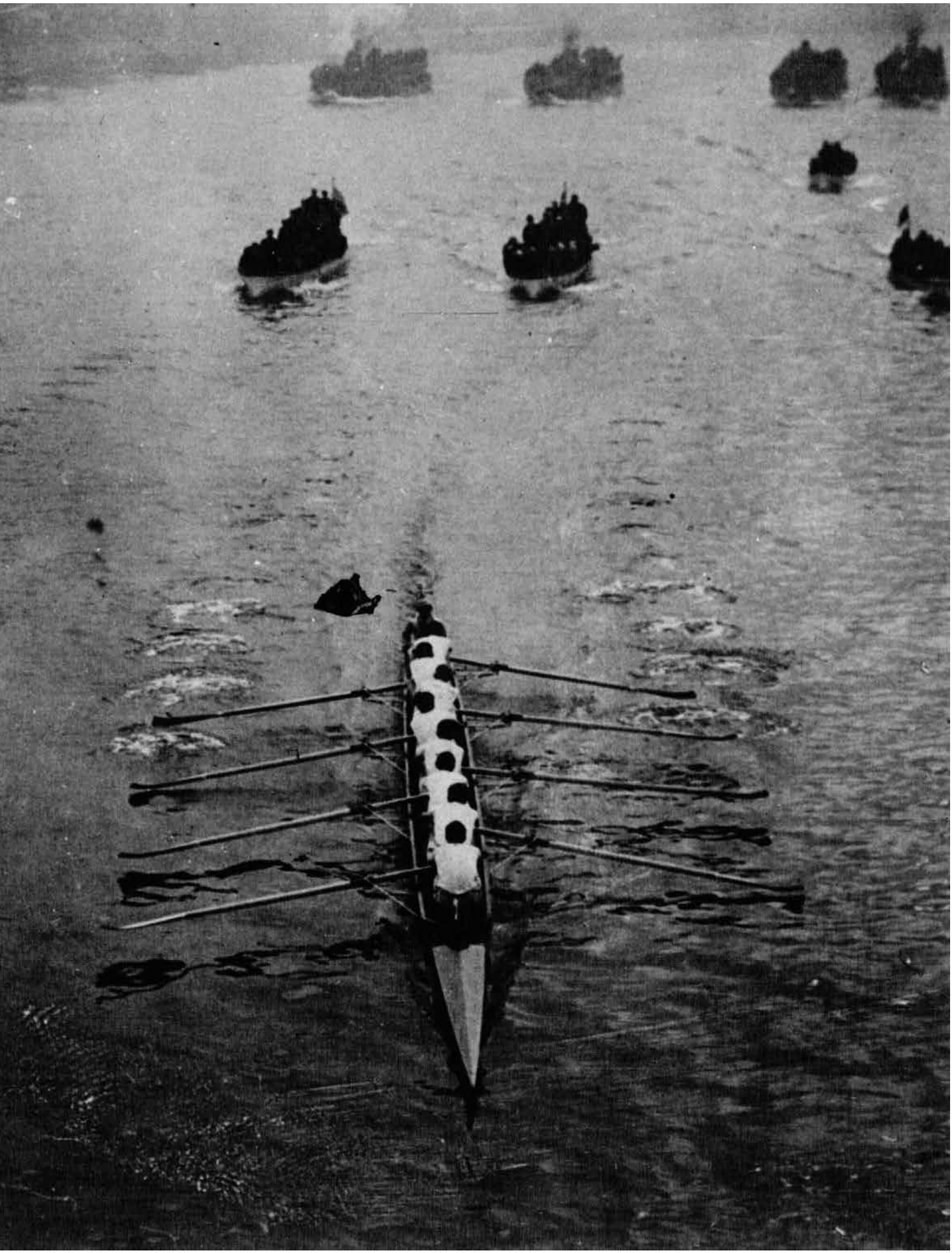
The Boat Race, London



In late March or early April of each year, the Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race takes place over a 4.2 mile course on the River Thames, from Putney to Mortlake. As many as 250,000 people line the banks of the Thames on both sides to watch the race, and millions more watch at home on television.

The race began in 1829, with a challenge from Charles Merivale, a Cambridge student. The first race took place at Henley, further up the river, and resulted in a victory for Oxford. The race was held at Henley until 1856, when it moved to its present location in London. Since that time, there have only been three hiatuses (the two World Wars and the Coronavirus Pandemic).The current tally stands at 85 wins for Cambridge and 81 for Oxford, with a single dead heat.

Pictured is the 1932 Boat Race.



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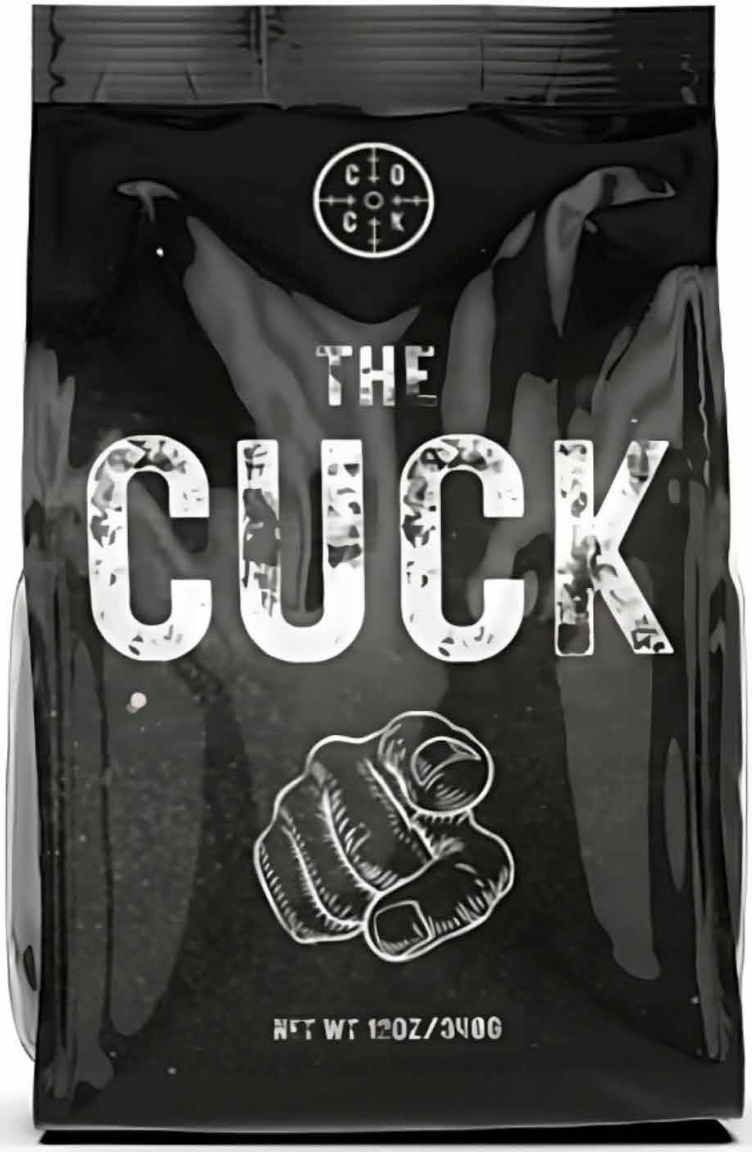

OUR NEW DECAF BLEND.
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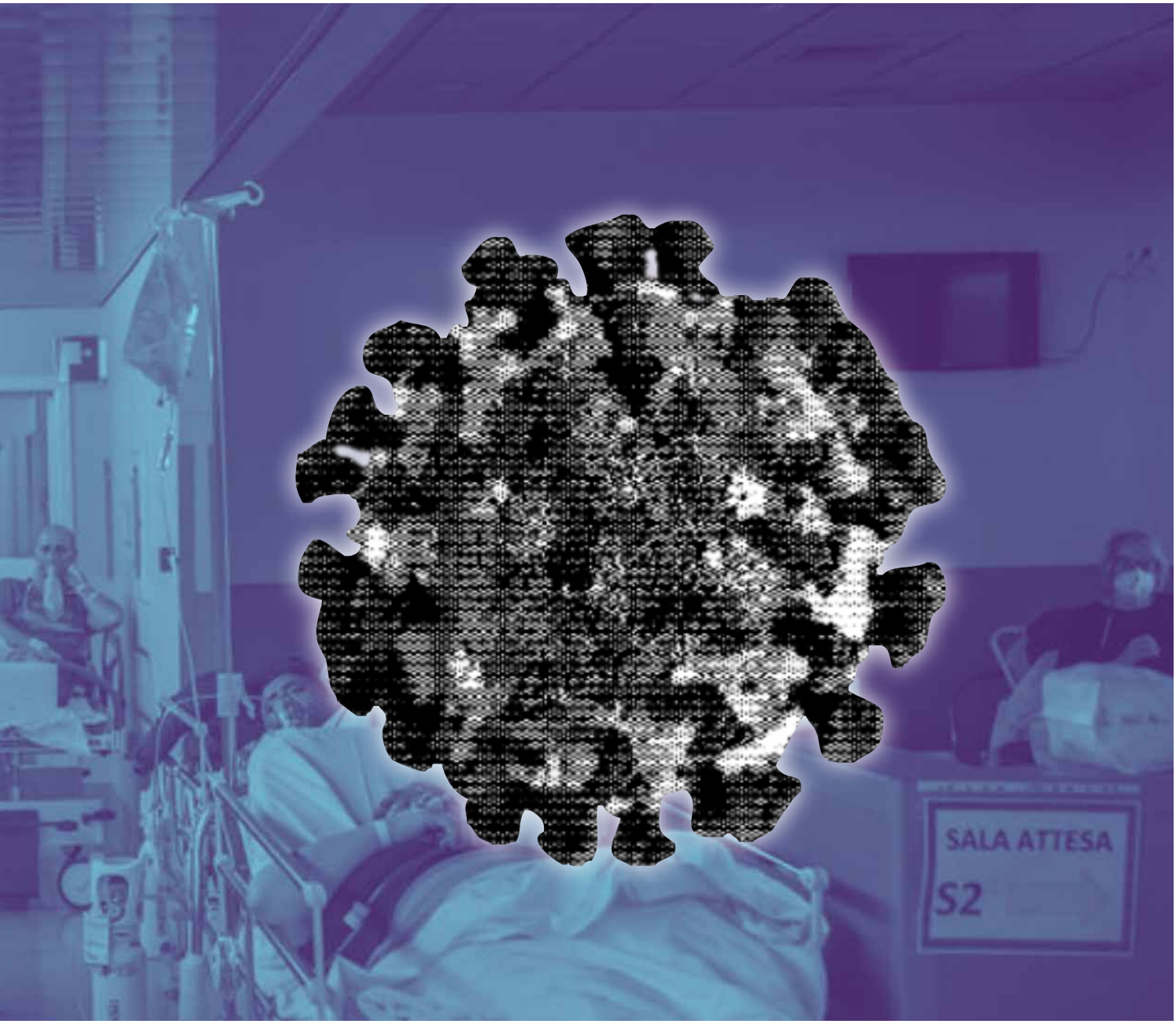
HERODOTEAN FIRE

BY LYCURGUS

essaY

“I began to appreciate that something very big and very bad was happening... which would probably last a very long time, and which was vastly more dangerous and unpredictable than any respiratory pathogen”

Images overleaf, clockwise from top: a playground in England during the height of the pandemic; people drink and dine in Sweden; then-chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel



THREE YEARS OF COVID

Three years have now passed since the beginning of the pandemic. But have we learned anything?

by EUGYPPIUS

I caught Covid for the first time just over three years ago. Almost everyone I knew in Munich fell ill at the same time. I had a terrible fever and a rough cough for four days, and I couldn't smell much of anything for the better part of the year that followed. I saw a doctor who told me he suspected that there had been cases all over Munich since at least mid-February, and that as far as he could tell, the plan was simply to look the other way and wait for the virus to pass.

Indeed, it seemed like nothing would happen at first. There were disturbing stories that Italy had house-arrested its entire population, but I went back to work, and it was mostly business as usual. Then-chancellor Angela Merkel gave

"Now I only remember the great speed of events, and how the sheer pace of upheavals in official assessments and policy consensus overwhelmed all critical faculties"

a speech saying that 70% of Germans could be expected to catch Covid sooner or later. One of my colleagues scoffed at a university decision to cancel a talk: he called it panic mongering and said that Italians have long been prone to health hysteria. Somebody else joked that maybe we'd get a few weeks' holiday out of the rising anxiety. It's often forgotten now, but as late as mid-March 2020, the forward-thinking view held that Covid was no big deal. Only right-wing internet conspiracy theorists worried about the virus back then.

It took mere days for that early lassitude to vanish, and for a great reversal to begin, as social media, the press and television began blaring the same uniform message day and night. This message was that Covid was not just a cold, as Christian Drosten had said at the start of the month. It was instead something much worse – something for which we'd have to shut down all of public life. Otherwise, the sick would overwhelm our hospitals, preventing anyone from receiving medical care. There were, in particular, insufficient ventilators to keep the virus-stricken elderly alive. Months earlier, when Covid had been an exotic event afflicting inland China, we'd been treated to multiple videos of young, healthy people collapsing in the street. Now that the virus had finally arrived, the risk was again moved just over the horizon, this time to nebulous care homes and intensive-care centres.

It was an effective campaign. I brought some books and my computer home from the office and submitted to the first-wave house arrest in my small Schwabing apartment. I was still allowed to exercise outside, but I couldn't sit or linger anywhere in public. The police cordoned off playgrounds with caution tape, and they patrolled the parks to enforce distancing rules. The streets of Munich, for the first time in my life, were totally deserted.

You'll say I ought to have known better, but there were very few voices counter-signalling the madness back then. Many of the most vocal supporters of shutdowns were on our own side. Now I only remember the great speed of events, and how the sheer pace of upheavals in official assessments and policy consensus overwhelmed all critical faculties. Only after the dust settled did there begin the slow process of understanding what had gone wrong.

I can't pinpoint any precise moment, but in the course of April two things began to trouble me above all. First, the high mortality that had been reported in specific regions of Italy failed to materialise north of the Alps, contrary to every prognostication. This destroyed the myth of a uniform pandemic, which would soon make every city into another Bergamo. Second, doctors began telling the press that the allegedly precious (and precious few) ventilators were actually being wildly overused, on balance killing rather than saving lives. Together, these revelations seemed to destroy most of the arguments that had been made for locking down in the first place, and so it was additionally disturbing that nobody wanted to report or even hear about them.

As the weeks went by, the strangeness just intensified: They opened the hair salons but kept the playgrounds closed. They put up signs on buses and the underground forbidding conversation. Fat female administrators – people whose job it was to sort things and answer the phone – used the new hygiene rules to seize control of my institute. They festooned every room and surface with a ridiculous combination of plastic shields, floor tape, and screaming signs; everyone had soon donned hideous masks (the very masks which we had been told just weeks earlier were powerless against viruses) and colleagues busied themselves pinning ever-changing advisories to cork boards. Infections dropped to nearly sub-detectable levels in the warm spring weather, and yet the hysteria didn't vanish, and politicians only slowly and reluctantly lifted restrictions. By the end of May,

I began to appreciate that something very big and very bad was happening, something which involved many different social, political and cultural forces, which would probably last a very long time, and which was vastly more dangerous and unpredictable than any respiratory pathogen.

*

Infections took off again in October 2020, and Germany locked down a second time – an extended exercise in idiocy and economic destruction that would continue for seven months. It was among the longest uninterrupted shutdowns of public life in Europe. What had begun as a highly questionable set of policies to stop a virus at the start of the year was now openly farcical. All across social media and in the alternative blogosphere, an increasingly sophisticated scene of pandemic critics began demonstrating the insanity and uselessness of non-pharmaceutical interventions to contain Covid, primarily via the government's own freely available statistics. Sweden had never closed, and in the ensuing months Florida and finally Texas reopened. All managed to avoid virus apocalypse, but nobody noticed or cared.

The second lockdown differed from the first in a few ways. In March, infections seemed to have already entered seasonal decline by the time mass testing began, which allowed everyone to pretend that the measures had been effective. In Novem-

ber, though, we were at the beginning rather than the end of a wave, and the lockdowns were powerless to turn it around. This lent a rawness and desperation to the discourse, as the flabby liberal German state manifested a steely and indifferent cruelty that I'd never in my life seen before.

This was also the era of the One Cool Trick, as crazed medical bureaucrats tried to enhance their closures with an ever-changing palette of additional harassing regulations that would totally make all the difference this time. Many of these One Cool Tricks were copied transparently from other countries or were copied by other countries in turn. Bavaria imposed a months-long curfew and forbade anyone from travelling more than 15 kilometres outside their home city. The cloth masks from the first wave were outlawed; by January 2021, FFP2 respirators were the rule. Select city squares were closed to deny the youth every possibility of socialising; police patrolled hills to enforce masks and social distancing among sledding children. Some jurisdictions set up snitching websites, where neighbours suspected of violating limits on gathering size could be reported anonymously. In the spring, the government rolled out a free antigen-testing programme, and limited re-openings were made conditional on the presentation of negative test results. Each new trick in this long, sad litany betrayed immediately its own failure, as infections continued unbothered along their prior trajectory, regardless of what anybody did.

To justify these measures, the Merkel government convened a whole gaggle of semi-official pandemic modellers. They were a puzzling collection of mid-level academics with no real accomplishments or credibility; the most distinguished was a physicist whose day job turned out to be modelling vehicular traffic flow. Like modellers the world over, they forever predicted catastrophe, but they were never right. While they removed the problem closures that were meant to solve the crisis to the fantasy world of their future projections, the press worked as before to transplant the reality of the present pandemic to out-of-sight hospital Corona wards. Allegedly overworked virus doctors gave panicked television interviews about the dire conditions, while all available statistics showed hospitals were historically under-occupied and bored nurses posted elaborate choreographed dance routines to social media.

*

Act 3 came to Germany in December 2020, with the vaccination of a 101-year-old woman named Edith Kwoizalla against the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. Later reporting revealed that this woman, the first German to receive the jab, didn't even want it. She said she'd seen enough in her long life, but her son told her it was necessary to protect her care home and her family. Her photo appeared across German media, but at first very little changed. Israel, the United Kingdom and the United States distributed their doses aggressively, while on the Continent, EU incompetence meant that the jabs were scarce. The press tried to revive the old hysteria with endless stories about the deadly Alpha variant, as official German data showed the vaccinators proceeding slowly, with breaks for bank holidays and at weekend.

In the earliest moments of this doubtful campaign, there was some reasonableness. Politicians assured the public that were would be no mandates. Injuries were reported openly; deadly blood-clots from the AstraZeneca vaccines generated headlines and attracted regulatory scrutiny. This period was short-lived, however, as it became increasingly clear that the vaccines were unable to do very much. In the United Kingdom, they simply to paved the way for Delta by wiping out the lingering Alpha lineages, while Israeli and then Icelandic data confirmed that they were powerless to prevent infection.

The response to these failures was not a dialling back of the campaign and a folding up of the pandemicist tables, but a doubling down. When fall 2021 arrived and the virus still persisted, the media and the bureaucrats and the politicians decided that the problem was that we had not vaccinated enough. Young people lined up for wholly unnecessary third doses, and Covid astrologers demonised the unvaccinated as tyrants who were holding all of society hostage. One by one the federal states imposed vaccination-pass schemes, which effectively excluded the unvaccinated from public life. Austria went so far as to lock down the unvaccinated and impose mandates, with a schedule of ruinous fines for anyone who refused. The German government began contemplating similar legislation. Vast numbers of unvaccinated workers

weren't allowed to work without presenting regular negative test results, often at great personal expense. Restrictions on public life returned, Christmas markets were cancelled for the third year in a row, and once again no amount of argument or proof seemed to matter. These were truly the darkest days, which finally alienated me from my entire social and professional world. I'll never see any of these people in the same light again.

What finally ended the circus was not social distancing, or masks, or contact-tracing apps, or BioNTech. It was not even the failure of the vaccines to stop transmission, or their apparent ability actually to enhance it, or the many severe adverse reactions, injuries and deaths that this heedless and entirely pointless campaign of maximum vaccination had wrought. It was, instead, that new and final variant, Omicron. Probably it is fitting that what started with a laboratory leak in Wuhan came to an end with another lab leak. This final flavour of Covid was not only milder and much more transmissible, but also anything but natural. We will probably never know where it came from; the technology to tinker with viruses is widely distributed and requires very little skill.

However it arose, Omicron immediately brought various matters into focus, which had not been clear before. One of these was the degree to which prior Covid lineages were vector-borne pathogens, dependent upon hospitals and care homes for a great part of their transmission. Such viruses can afford to be much more virulent, because they depend on intermediaries (in this case, hospital staff) to spread among incapacitated hosts. Omicron, in contrast, was much like other ordinary human-infecting coronaviruses, in that it depended primarily upon direct contact to hop from human to human, and so could not afford to cause seriously debilitating symptoms. By limiting social interaction for two years, we had almost surely artificially restrained evolutionary forces pushing Covid to depend more heavily on direct transmission and become less pathogenic.

Another thing that became clearer, was just how much the overall transmissibility of Covid had been exaggerated. Government Covidians tried to portray Omicron as the most transmissible virus known to man, but influenza surveillance statistics suggested that, after the initial wave in early 2022, it was about as infectious as other common respiratory viruses. Pre-Omicron lineages, meanwhile, had been relatively slow-moving and probably no more deadly than pandemic influenza, adjusting for age and obesity.

The third and most important thing that Omicron laid bare, was the fragility of the two-year-old pandemic regime. First lockdowns and then vaccination had each ridden a wave of public enthusiasm that was, by then, well past its apex. Countries which had failed to take multiple off-ramps from pandemic insanity began packing in the Covid regime almost immediately. The appetite for lockdowns had entirely evaporated, with the extended school closures attracting increasingly bitter repudiation in these months. Popular excitement for the vaccines, meanwhile, had been drained by nothing so much as repeated exposure to them and their terrible side-effect profile. Germany was among the last countries to withdraw restrictions, and those politicians who were slowest to renounce them have faced a heavy price, which they are still paying.

As I type this in March 2023, the mania is over, here and everywhere. We live in a new, post-Covid era, distinguished by unhealthier, fatter, and idler people; by labour shortages, as years of closures and work-at-home schemes have convinced many people to leave official employment forever; by new cultural and social volatility, as the after-effects of intense virus propaganda; and by a bloated and menacing public health establishment, which is already on the hunt for the next pathogen.

*

As for how to make sense of this, there are as many theories as theorisers.

For some, it represents an effort by the globalist elite to institute a Chinese-style social credit system, or to impoverish and imprison the peoples of the West and reset their societies along more closely governable and climate-friendly lines. For others, particularly Americans, it constitutes an unprecedented worldwide plot to increase pharmaceutical profits masterminded by Anthony Fauci. Still others fear that the terrifying mass vaccination campaign harboured the hidden goal of depopulating the earth, or see the years of virus terror messaging and the radicalised popular response as

part of a totalitarian campaign to hypnotise and subdue the alienated, depressed and confused citizenries of the modern world. Most people seem to believe some combination of all of these things.

I cling to the less popular and still bleaker thesis, that it was about nothing at all. The lockdowns, the masks, the vaccines – it was all entirely meaningless and to no purpose. With industrialisation and the emergence of mass society in the West, we are burdened by increasingly complex and autonomous bureaucracies full of technocratic solutionists, who are forever on the hunt for problems to solve. Within their ranks lurks a diffuse (and in retrospect quite ominous) pandemic establishment, scattered across public health institutions, think tanks and non-governmental organisations, who have spent generations fund-raising on improbable predictions of impending virus catastrophe. The tinder for this match was the ageing boomers, who are increasingly leaving active employment and indulging in mortality anxiety at a rate no society has ever seen before. The flu from Wuhan turned all the dials in the right direction, setting alight a great and absurd conflagration that was entirely unnecessary, that any rational government from even ten years ago would have stopped immediately, and that alas has changed the world forever, by making us all poorer, sicker and more depressed.

If there is an upside to any of this, it is that what unfolded after 2020 has discredited the cult of Science and modern technocracy more catastrophically than any other single event in modern history. Learned charlatans dressed up as the very incarnations of Western scientific achievement spent three years parading their broken theories and their worthless solutions before the public, only to fail every single time. We can't afford to reconstruct these events as an elaborate, twelve-dimensional plot by hyperclever experts to crash the global economy and ruin all of our lives. Anybody can break things; it is the building up and the improvement of things which require plotting. We must let all of these intolerable, self-satisfied virologoids be the incommensurate losers that they are. Only by cultivating the memory of their failure do we stand a chance of foiling their next hyperclever peer-reviewed plan to improve our health.

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Scout habitats near you
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Who Poo
Who Poo is a new wildlife app for hikers, dogwalkers, hunters and outdoorsmen. Designed for Americans who don't always fit in an urban cage, let's make it a Who Poo summer! Containing an interactive library, Who Poo explores wild animals and their scat near you. Who Poo uses your location to show animals that may be nearby. A filter feature in the library allows users to input scat dimensions and animal track features to find matching wildlife. The library includes photos from President Theodore Roosevelt's North American hunting journals. Who Poo users can also upload their own photos to complete the in-app encyclopedia. Who Poo is currently free and available for download from Google Play and Apple stores.
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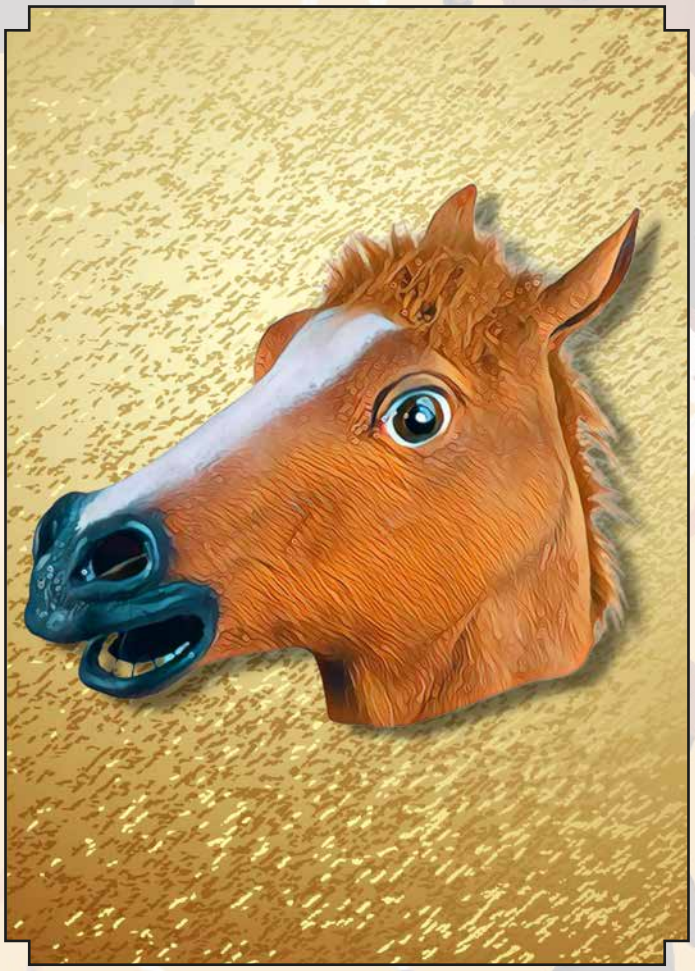


"HORSE"

fiction

Raw Egg Nationalist

A hand emerged from among the tangled mass of quilt and reached towards the bedside table. At last it found what it was searching for – her IPhone, which was blindly drilling its way across the wooden surface towards the edge.

Silence.

She lay under the covers for a few minutes longer, resisting the urge to return to sleep. Normally, she never set an alarm unless she had specific content to create or somewhere she had to be. Today was a day she had somewhere to be.

She headed towards the bathroom first. Most days, she'd just brush her teeth and then have breakfast, but this morning she had to have a shower too. Technically, she shouldn't have been doing this, because today was actually the seventh day since she'd had a shower, and she only showered once every ten days, but the last time she'd seen a client, he had let his displeasure at her newly acquired odour – he was a fairly regular client – be known. So she turned on the faucet and waited for it to run hot – *scaldingly* hot, she liked to say – and then got in. She'd use a little soap this time too. Just a little.

A couple of months earlier, when she'd first stopped taking showers, she'd tried to explain it to some of her friends at this tech-influencer-dinner-thing in the Valley. It had been a disaster. At that stage, all she'd really known about not-showering had come from a Twitter thread she'd seen, and the champagne and cocktails and probably her new medication (interactions: unclear at this point) hadn't helped either. They all just looked at her like they thought she was weird, which she knew they kind of did anyway. Still, after some research including a wellness podcast or three, she now knew exactly what to say about the skin having its own microbiome and how certain bacteria are actually the skin's best friend and outcompete bad bacteria and man had spent hundreds of thousands of years without soap so why would he need it now etc. She was going to try not washing her hair too, since she'd seen another Twitter thread saying that was the secret to why French women had such beautiful hair and of course she wanted to have beautiful hair. Truth was, she hated her hair, even though she got regular compliments about it. The last time a man complimented her on it in person, she'd wanted to get it cut straight away.

Eczema's a terrible thing – she'd suffered with it since she was a child – but thank God for Photoshop. And the not-showering seemed to be working; although now, almost immediately after the water had stopped, she felt like scratching the crooks of her elbows and that spot behind her right knee. Habit, she supposed. She liked to let her body dry off as naturally as possible, so she stood there in the cubicle as the fog cleared. With her little finger she drew a cock and balls in the condensation, adding hair to the balls and then a great stream of piss or jizz – she didn't know which – that arced across the glass towards some unknown target, before she obliterated the whole thing with a quick wave of her hand. That had become a habit too.

Maybe ten minutes passed as she moisturised her body with an expensive lotion one of her girlfriends had recommended. It had no phthalates in it and seemed to do the trick for her sensitive skin. She'd lost

"Probably the only part of her body she hadn't gazed into or at for any length of time was in fact her navel. She liked her little innie"

count of the number of different brands she'd tried and discarded. She looked at her breasts for a while in the bathroom mirror, appraising them with her head cocked to one side then the other. She squinted at them. She could never work out if one was larger than the other, but she was sure that the nipples didn't quite match. While the areola of the left breast was a perfect circle, the right breast's was shaped more like… well, an egg. A kind of squashed egg, but an egg nonetheless. She let out a little sigh.

She moved on to the rest of her body. Despite the endless attention she got as one of the top 0.001% of all content creators on the platform, the reality was that she had never been more insecure about her body than she was now. The initial sense of liberation and power had soon passed, replaced by a gnawing feeling that every inch of her body, including parts she had never considered worthy of attention at all, were now subject to unforgiving, unrelenting scrutiny. Her feet were one such body part. The daily downpour of requests for custom pictures of them – always at an extra cost, of course, sometimes a substantial extra cost – had made her aware of them as something much more than just feet – things that she walked on (not as much as she should have!), things that hurt when she wore high heels and things that itched when she had fungus, which seemed to be quite a lot these days. Although she couldn't see her feet now in the large mirror above the sink, that didn't mean she hadn't spent plenty of time, hours actually, in deep contemplation of their every aspect. Probably the only part of her body she hadn't gazed into or at for any length of time was in fact her navel. She liked her little innie.

Apart from her breasts it was her stomach that was really bugging her at the moment. Standing side on and pushing it out hardly made her feel better, but still she did it today, as yesterday, and the day before… and, come to think of it, the day before that. Finally, she completed the effect of a swollen drum by playing a scatty little fill on it with both hands, before releasing the tension and exhaling.

After brushing her teeth and applying a little makeup, she went back to the bedroom via the open-plan living room, picking up a jumper she had discarded a few days earlier on one of the chairs. The condo was modest, certainly for someone who was now making as much money as she was, but she liked it – especially the views and the fact it was in a very private area – and anyway there was plenty of time for her to think about upsizing.

Choosing the right outfit wouldn't take her long. She changed into a comfortable set of grey track pants, put on a slightly crumpled white t-shirt and then a grey hoodie over the top. No bra or panties. Then she finished the look with a pair of tennis socks and her favourite white sneakers, which had certainly seen better days. She always preferred to travel this way and would usually stop somewhere else and get changed "properly" for the encounter, even if it was just the airport toilets. She'd managed to get pretty good at making herself irresistible in the shittiest places.

This time, though, there'd be none of that. The client had asked her for a "GF experience", something she'd never done, so that was what he was going to get, or at least her interpretation of it anyway. She was going to turn up at his place in normal clothes, looking a bit tired and worse for wear (the flight would see to that, especially if she had to pop a few pills to get through it) and then they were going to sit on the sofa watching crap TV and eating pizza. Because that was the reality of having her as a girlfriend – not that she'd been anybody's girlfriend for a long time.

Sometimes, she thought she wasn't really a sexual person at all. She'd read an interview with a big female pornstar who'd just retired, aged 24, to have a kid and this former pornstar had said that she didn't know why she ever became a pornstar since she actually hated sex. Not indifference to it, not fatigue from having so much all the time, but hate! Needless to say, people had been pretty incredulous about this, especially since she'd also called for all forms of porn to be banned – how convenient, they said, for a woman looking to escape her past – but the first part, the not-being-sexual bit, made perfect sense. It was real –

"Basically, the way we think about sex is just a big mess. A big hypocritical mess made worse by the dead old white men of Western philosophy"

at least sometimes. Call it cognitive dissonance, call it whatever you want, that was the truth. Getting people to believe it, however, was a totally separate matter. Sex and sexuality are just these all-encompassing things, things that are supposed to engross and define us, and Aristotle really hadn't helped things with his principle of non-contradiction. Basically, the way we think about sex is just a big mess. A big hypocritical mess made worse by the dead old white men of Western philosophy.

Couldn't she be a sex-worker and not sexual, at least not all the time? Couldn't she say she was just exploring sexuality, like it was a foreign tribe and she a kind of anthropologist collecting data in their village? She liked that image, her with a little clipboard and helmet, out in the wilds of human desire and emotion, but somehow desireless and emotionless herself.

And yet there was something about this new client that disconcerted her. Sex hadn't actually come up once in her conversation with Chris – might as well say his name – and he wasn't the alpha-male type, the usual type who arranged to meet her; that much was clear. *They* always opened with a proposition, not a request, and promised what a good time they'd show her. Most of them were tech bros and most of them turned out to be a real disappointment; although one or two knew what they were doing. At the end of the day, with them, it was money. A lot of money. Money that made it worth getting on a plane for. Enough that she only did this a few times – okay, 20 times – a year.

With Chris it seemed to be something different. Of course he was going to pay her – as much, actually, as all the others – but it wasn't money she *needed*. Maybe it was just the novelty of his request that had made her say yes, or maybe it was the tenderness, or the suggestion of tenderness – of real intimacy – that had done it. She had a strange feeling that sat somewhere around her stomach and definitely wasn't anything to do with what she'd eaten. She could deal with a man who just wanted her for her body, but this... She was trying not to think about it too hard.

As far as luggage was concerned, she barely had anything to bring with her, beyond her tallow lipbalm (very good for sensitive lips, which hers were) and the current book she was reading. No sex toys or other paraphernalia, no costumes. Just lipbalm, maybe some pajamas, and of course her book. Last week she'd finished My Body by Emily Rajtakowski (you know, *the girl* from the Blurred Lines video (although she really didn't want to be known just for that performance, which in any case wasn't fully consensual)), and now she was doing her best to read the first of the two latest Cormac McCarthy novels, *The Passenger*. The premise of this one, on the surface at least, was a bit like *No Country for Old Men* (man in the wrong place at the wrong time), but what made it more interesting was that it was also sort of like McCarthy's last will and testament – in literary terms – because he'd been working on it for sixteen years and was going to die soon. There was simply no way he'd ever write another novel: this was it. He'd spent the last fifteen or something years as a fellow at the Santa Fe Institute, this mecca for scientific and mathematical geniuses, and so there were all sorts of advanced mathematical and physics-based themes running through the book. She loved novels with subtext. She couldn't pretend that she was going to understand all of it, though, but that never stopped her. She'd ticked *Infinite Jest* off the list a few months ago – finally! – and felt pretty damn proud. Maybe one day she'd write a novel herself. Maybe it would be about a woman just like her.

There was one final thing she had to do before she left, something which required a little more focus. She woke her Mac and opened the browser on Twitter. 500 new followers. If she'd had more time she'd have checked her notifications and maybe, if she was feeling brave, her direct messages, but she didn't have time to do that. She pressed the button to start a poll and began to type:

A man rapes a chi-

No. Not good. "Rape" was too emotive a word. She deleted it and started again.

A male pedophile sexually assaults a child.

Hmm. "Pedophile" wasn't a good word either. It

COMING SOON NOTFLIX
ALFRED
THE FATHER OF ENGLAND

NORMAL PEOPLE DON'T EAT 18 EGGS A DAY

suggested that was the man's identity, that it couldn't be changed. She didn't want that, not entirely.

A man experiencing pedophilic urges sexually assaults a child.

Yes. Better. *Contingency* – that was what she wanted to convey. She continued.

Later it's discovered that a brain tumour was causing him to have uncontrollable urges to assault children. He has surgery to remove the tumour and is cured. He now has no such urges at all.

Should he be put in prison for the assault on the child?

There: there it was. She waited for a moment and re-read the thought experiment a few times, carefully. She hated having to delete a tweet and re-write it because of some minor grammatical error, especially when it was a tweet on an important topic like this. None such. She held her breath, then pressed "tweet".

She always felt a rush when she pressed "tweet", whether it was to release an innocuous observation about which foods caused her IBS to flare up or a poll like this one, which she expected to excite her followers much more; although it still surprised her how much her IBS could excite them too. If anything, the rush had only grown in the four or so years she'd been on the platform. She supposed that meant its creators had done their job well.

For this particular poll, she'd gotten the idea from a post in one of the subreddits she visited regularly (probably r/fuckthatsinteresting, not that it was important). A 40-year-old schoolteacher had been convicted of molesting a number of young children, before it was discovered that he had a brain tumour that was apparently causing his behaviour. It was removed, and for a while he was fine, but the urges came back and doctors discovered, after a second MRI, that the tumour had regrown. When they removed it, he was fine again. She loved cases like that because they illustrated the contingency of morality (that word again!), the fact that ultimately we're all just pieces of meat governed by our biological coding and not a will that's free from the material constraints everything else is subject to. It just takes a little tumour, or maybe a catastrophic brain injury, repeated blows to the head from performing diving headbutts and taking chair-shots to the temple, to make us see it.

There'd be pushback, she knew of course. There always was, even if you tried to make the language as neutral, as value-free and *scientific*, as she had. People are governed by their emotions, especially when children are involved. *Especially when children are involved*. But the presence or absence of children in her thought-experiments meant nothing. It was just a test to see if people could think clearly, if they could allow themselves to be rational animals. Eventually, she hoped, people would surrender these outdated ideas like "free will", "choice" and "responsibility" and then nobody would suffer for things that were out of their control. Nobody should be punished for behaviour they couldn't do anything to change, right? No reasonable person could argue otherwise: she kept telling herself that.

The pushback was part of the fun too; although she was careful to block the ones who pushed back too hard. Any mention of the way she looked, her profession – which in any case didn't define who she was – or her life-history, especially her relationship with her father, was an instant block. No exceptions.

There'd be plenty of simps too, who'd try to smuggle personal compliments into their outwardly sincere responses. *This is such an interesting philosophical issue that poses so many questions about our identity and morality. You're really beautiful, by the way. Will you sleep with me?* Bald head. Glasses. Mid-to-late 30s. She knew the type. What she didn't know, but wanted to know, was how many of them subscribed to her content. Lots, probably. But then again men could be pretty cheap, and there were plenty of ways to find her pictures for free.

She had some females among these admirers too, which she certainly didn't mind. In fact, there was this one woman, a journal editor from Australia, who really advertised her loose sexuality on Twitter. It was obvious that this woman's engagement with her tweets was about more than just the exchange of ideas, and she'd casually mentioned a number of times that she'd be on the West Coast later this year. Now there was an idea…

An idea that was interrupted by the familiar pinging of her phone: the Uber had arrived.

She was already on the Twitter app, watching the likes, comments and retweets begin to pile up, as the car pulled away towards the airport. She smiled and, as she looked up from her phone, caught the driver's eye in the rearview. She felt herself blush; she didn't know why.

A little later, as the car merged into traffic on the freeway, she remembered that she'd forgotten to leave the flap open for Malcolm Gladwell. Thankfully, she had an app for that too.

Technology, she thought to herself. *Where would we be without it?*

“
Being a conservative is just like treading water. You have to keep your head out of the water and remain in the same place. Forever.
Dr Jordan B. Peterwasher
For more Dr Jordan B. Peterwasher quotes, visit washyourpeter.com

FiLM

JOHN RAMBO

AND THE POSSIBILITY OF AN HEROIC CHRISTIANITY

Can Christianity bridge the great divide between warrior and priest?

by SEMMELWEIS

Jonathan Bowden said that within right-wing movements, and more generally right-wing thought itself, there is a split between those who favor a pagan ethic and those who favor a Christian ethic. In my view, this split is reflective of a deep schism in the Western soul itself, caused by nearly two thousand years of Christianity, which itself has always been split between its Jewish and Indo-European influences. It could also be seen as reflecting the eternal tension between compassion and power. Broadly speaking, those who favor a Christian ethic tend to be more concerned with morality, while pagans tend to emphasize strength. Christians deride the pagan approach as immoral and wicked ("What shall it

profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?"), while pagans criticize the Christian approach as inherently weak and ineffective.

In Traditionalist thought (by which I mean the school of thought associated with Rene Guenon, Julius Evola and others) this dynamic is reflected in the relationship between the sacerdotal and warrior castes. The relationship between priests and warriors — particularly in the *kali yuga*, the time of degeneration in which both castes have fallen away from their higher roles — is an explicit theme of Sylvester Stallone's 2008 film *Rambo*, henceforth referred to as *John Rambo* to avoid confusion with earlier films. (*John Rambo* was the film's original title when still in production, and is the title of the director's cut available on DVD. I will mention a few differences between the two versions.) In this essay, I will explore several Traditionalist themes in the film.

The basic storyline is as follows: Rambo, after the events of the first three films, is living a reclusive life in Thailand in the present day. A group of American Christian missionaries arrives, wishing to rent his boat to go into Burma to deliver food and medical supplies to the Karen tribespeople, a group of fellow Christians who are being persecuted and murdered by the Burmese military dictatorship. When the missionaries first arrive in Thailand, Michael, the ostensible leader of the group, approaches Rambo about renting his boat. He is obviously a self-righteous individual with a grandiose view of the importance

"Rambo's feeling that he has wasted his life reflects the alienation of the warrior caste in the modern world"

of his actions, and his appeal for Rambo's help is made in two equally insulting and ineffective ways: he extols the alleged virtue of his mission, implying that Rambo would be privileged to assist such a grand undertaking, but also, since he regards Rambo as his inferior, assumes that he will have little understanding of or sympathy with such motives, and so offers him money as compensation.

First, Michael explains that he and his church group want to bring food and medical supplies to the Karen people, and that their actions will "help change peoples' lives."

"Are you bringin' in any weapons?" Rambo asks.

"Of course not," Michael replies.

"Then you're not changin' anything."

Michael, dismayed, responds that "It's thinking like that that keeps the world the way it is."

Rambo's reply is terse: "Fuck the world."

At the beginning of the story, Rambo is basically a nihilist and a pessimist, though also a realist, as many such people are. Michael, on the other hand, represents false religion, a kind of spirituality that is neither sacerdotal nor warrior, but mercantile; materialistic. He is a near-perfect illustration of the priestly type that Nietzsche castigates in *Genealogy of Morals* and *The Antichrist.* Though espousing ideals of peace, forgiveness and charity, he is quickly revealed as a petty man who looks down on others as being "less good" than himself. In actuality Rambo sees him for what he is: a naive moralizer who knows neither his true self nor what he is getting into by going into the "warzone" that is Burma.

Michael, as the leader of the missionaries, assumes that if he cannot persuade Rambo, no one can, and so suggests that the group move on. But Sarah, Michael's fiancé, then makes an attempt. She displays feminine gentleness and so is not met with quite the same harshness that Michael was, but is nonetheless refused. But she is persistent. She tries again later, visiting Rambo in his blacksmith shop.

"You shouldn't be in here," he says to her. Sarah attempts to appeal to his conscience, but gets nowhere since Rambo is too hardened. "It's not my business," he says. It is only when she asks him a philosophical question that she starts to get his attention.

"Do you believe that people are put here to die for no reason? Or believe in giving time to anything other than yourself? I mean, do you believe in anything?" This is of course one of *the* questions of our time for Western man: Do you believe in *anything*? Since the collapse of Christianity during the last several hundred years, there hasn't been anything big enough to fill the spiritual void — those who "believe in Science" show all too clearly what a poor substitute for God that is.

Rambo cannot answer, though the question has touched him. He can only say, "You really ought to go." He knows that she has seen his weakness, his incompleteness, but there is nothing to be done about it.

Sarah, in contrast to Michael, represents a kind of genuine liberal spirituality; marked by naivete to be sure, but also motivated by real kindness and capable of real sacrifice. Rambo has an instinctive recognition of and respect for it, even though or perhaps because it is so different from his own way, his own path.

Later that night, she tries a third time. The dialogue that ensues is the most important in the film, and lays bare the philosophical issues being addressed. (The full dialogue only appears in the Director's Cut.)

Rambo: "Why'd you come back?"

Sarah: "Waiting for you."

"I told you before I can't help you."

"Why?"

"I don't want to. Where are your friends?"

"At the hotel. I can take care of myself."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. I know you don't like us."

"I never said that."

"Well it looks that way. We need to go and help these people."

"Who are you helping? Them, or you?"

"Does it matter?"

"Yeah it matters."

Who are you helping — them, or you? Are you really some kind of altruist, or are you just another one of these puffed-up do-gooders out to inflate your own ego by showing the world, or even just yourself, how "spiritual" and "good" you are? (The Tibetan Buddhist teacher Chogyam Trungpa called this tendency "spiritual materialism." Curiously, one of the mercenaries in the film has a tattoo of Trungpa on his arm, which is shown briefly in close-up.)

"Them. There's nothing missing in our lives back home. We're here to make a

difference. We believe all lives are special."

"Some lives. Some, no."

"Really? If everyone thought like you nothing would ever change."

"Nothing does change."

"Of course it does. Nothing stays the same."

"Live your life, 'cause you got a good one."

"That's what I'm trying to do."

"No, you're trying to change what is."

"And what is?"

"That we're like animals. It's in the blood. It's natural. Peace, that's an accident.

It's what is. When you're pushed, killing's as easy as breathing. Then the killing

stops in one place and starts in another, but that's okay, 'cause you're killing for

your country. But it ain't your country who's asking, it's a few men up top who want

it. Old men start it, young men fight it, nobody wins, everybody in the middle dies,

and nobody tells the truth. God's gonna make all that go away? (Pause.) Don't

waste your life. I did. Go home. Really, go home."

Sarah begins to walk away, but then turns around.

"You care."

"What?"

"You care. Because if you didn't, you would have taken us there, taken the money,

and be done with it. But you didn't do that. Maybe you've lost your faith in people.

But you must still be faithful to something. Believe me, I'm scared. And I love my

life, and I don't want to lose it. But trying to save a life isn't wasting your life, is it?

Will you help us?"

"Alright."

Rambo's feeling that he has wasted his life reflects the alienation of the warrior caste in the modern world, a world in which fighting for a just cause has become a luxury, and a rare one at that. The generation of men who fought in Vietnam are an especially poignant symbol of this alienation, since not only were they the pawns of "a few men up top" who pushed America into the war, but they also were largely denied the gratitude or even approval of their fellow citizens

upon their return home.

In his book *On Killing*, Army psychologist Dave Grossman documents how welcoming parades and other such public ceremonies are crucially important for the psychological health of returning soldiers, since they function as a rite of passage back into civilian life and also provide validation for the morally questionable actions that the soldiers may have performed in the line of duty. Grossman notes that the experiences of returning Vietnam veterans stands in stark contrast to the experiences of those who fought in World War 2, the latter of whom were met by adoring crowds who hailed them as triumphant heroes, while the former were often met by protesters "spitting and calling me 'baby-killer' and all that crap," to use Rambo's words from *First Blood*.

Rambo's worldview at this point is essentially that which is expressed in Longfellow's excellent poem "The Challenge of Thor."

Force rules the world still,
Has ruled it, shall rule it,
Meekness is weakness,
Strength is triumphant
Over the whole earth

This worldview is inegalitarian and hierarchical, but also nihilistic. It lacks a connection to the transcendent, a sense of the sacred. Sarah does have a sense of the sacred, but it is abstracted, bloodless, blind to the realities of this life. That, in a nutshell, is the degenerated conditions of the warrior and priest castes in the modern world.

Whereas liberalism in its religious and secular manifestations outright denies the animal nature of man, which is a perversion of traditional doctrines of man's higher nature coexisting with his lower nature, there is a particular strain of atheistic or materialistic right-wing thought which holds that man is an animal *and nothing else besides*. This view is epitomized by the book *Might Is Right*, which was first popularized by Anton LaVey, founder of the Church of Satan. It seems to be the view espoused by Rambo here. But as we can see, even though this view affords him considerable prestige since he is a killer among killers, the top of the food chain, he is nonetheless spiritually impoverished.

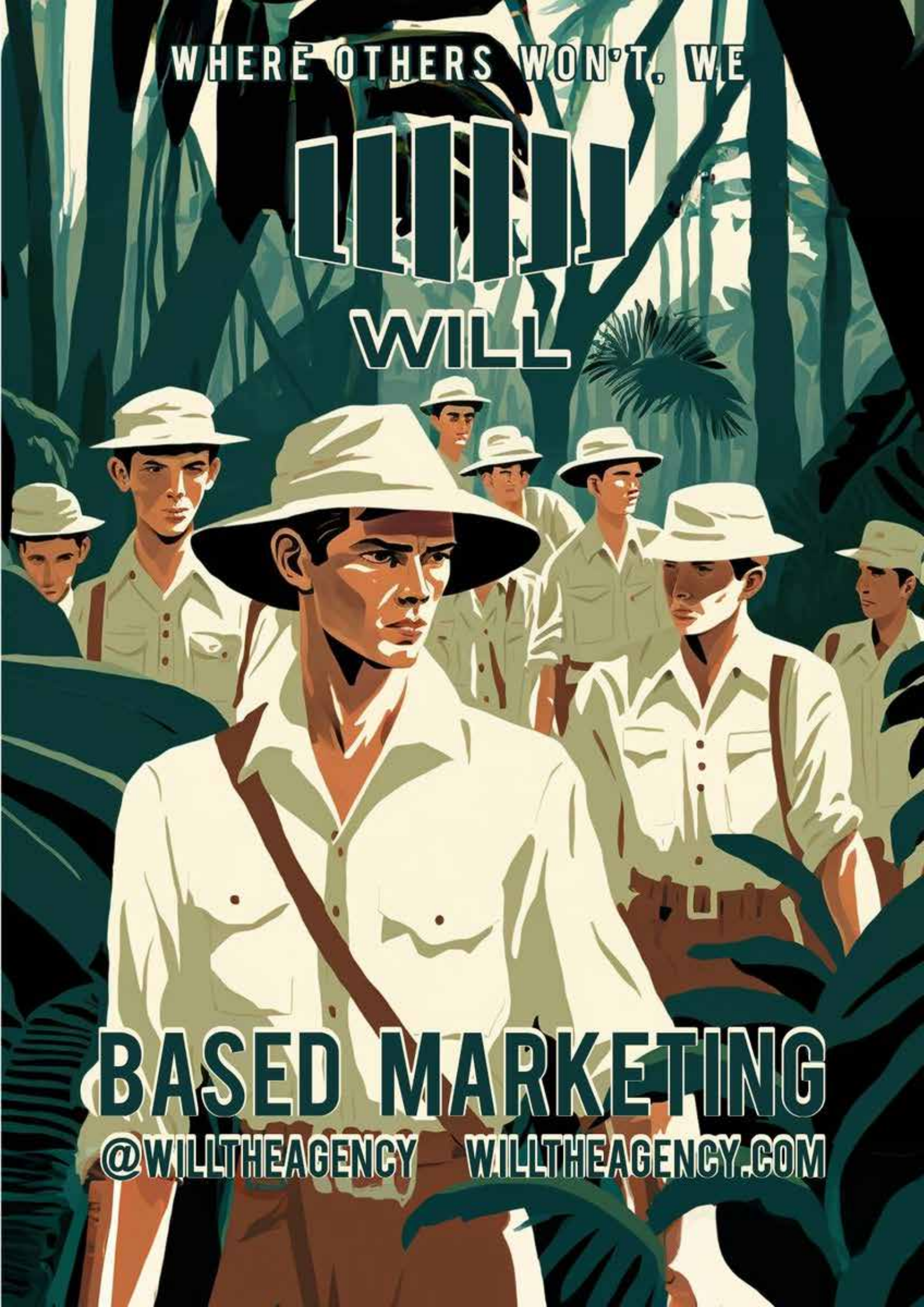
To understand why, we can refer to the Indo-Aryan traditions of the *Bhagavad Gita* and the life story of Shakyamuni Buddha. Both stories are centered on Aryan warriors — Arjuna in the Gita and Prince Gautama the Buddha.

The Bhagavad Gita begins with Arjuna, the greatest warrior of his people, breaking down in agony at the realization that all of his fighting and killing is ultimately for naught. Indeed, he is about to enter into a battle in which he will have to fight members of his own clan, his own family, even his gurus. (It should be remembered that the traditional teacher-student relationship is considered sacred in a way that most modern people are incapable of understanding.) At this point of crisis, marked by the paralysis of pessimism and the inertia of despair, the god Krishna comes to teach him something of a higher view, a higher plane of being.

In the story of the Buddha, prince Gautama of the Shakya clan, a *ksatriya* warrior clan, is born into a life of the greatest privilege, not only in terms of material wealth but also physical and genetic endowment. He consistently bests all of his fellows in every competition of talent and strength; he is the quintessential alpha male. And yet the deep realities of life — its fundamental impermanence, its inevitable sickness, old age and death — reveal to him a deep spiritual lack, which none of his worldly victories and comforts can fill. And so he goes off in search of greater wisdom and transcendence, ultimately becoming the Buddha, the "awakened one."

The character of Rambo has some parallels to both Arjuna and Gautama, not because he will ultimately become a sage but because he is a great warrior in a moment of spiritual crisis. He is a man of great power and could easily become a figure like Colonel Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now*, creating his own little kingdom with servants and slaves somewhere in the jungles of the third world. But he does not desire this; if anything, he seems to desire to do some kind of good in the world — he is repeatedly shown giving alms to monks — but is unable to see clearly what that could be, especially given who and what he is, because Christianity has never really known what to do with men like him.

Where the Christian tradition — to which the character of Rambo is aligned both because of his cultural and historical context and also because of the filmmaker's religious background — has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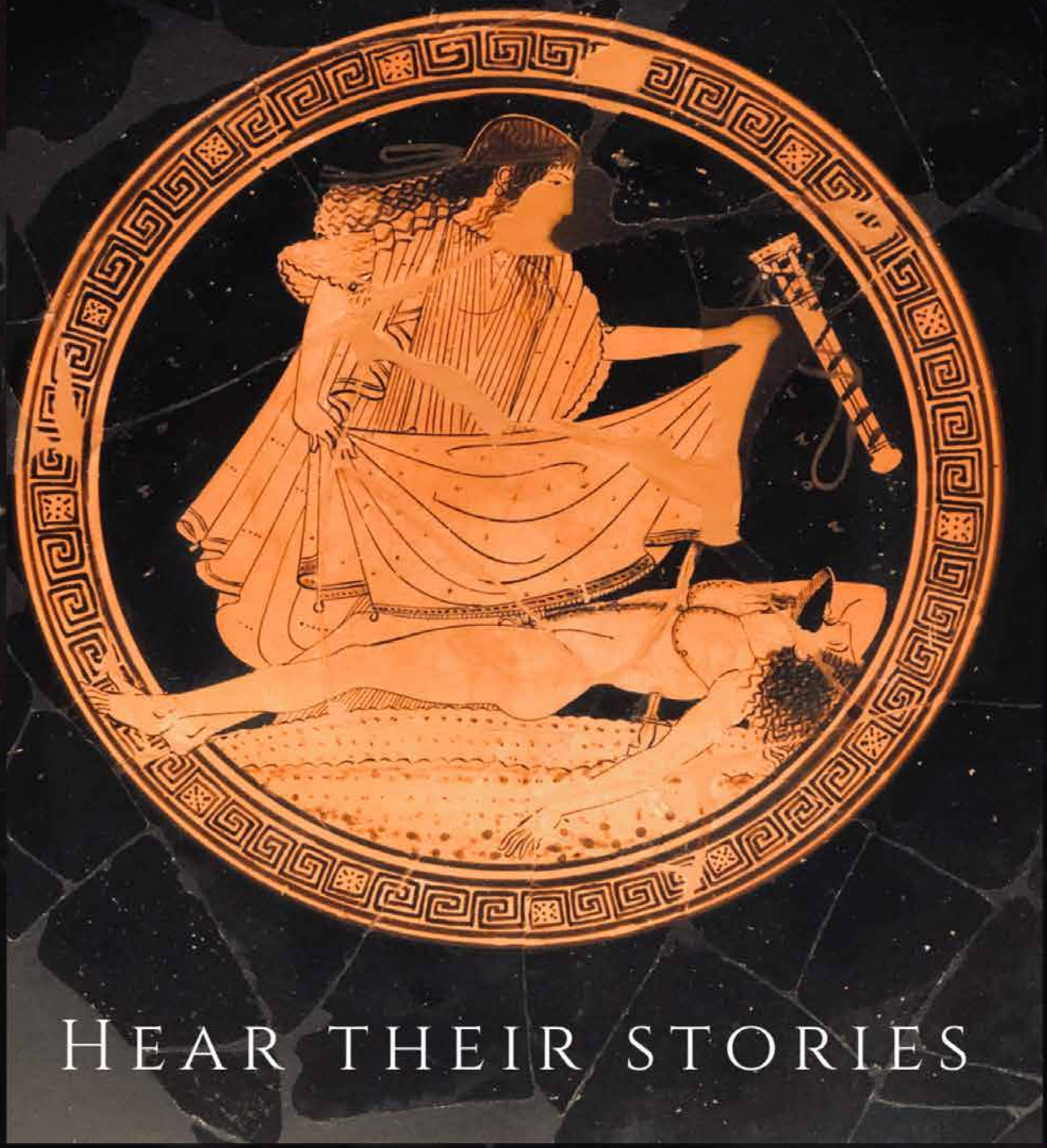

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tended to deviate from the larger Indo-European religious tradition is in its long-standing unease with warrior virtues and ethics. Although at times a kind of reconciliation between the warrior and priest castes seems to have been reached, as with the knightly orders of the Middle Ages, the Christian tradition as a whole is nonetheless marked by a divide between warrior ideals and the ideals of sainthood which is greater than in most traditions. Dante's *Commedia* awards places in heaven to some rather brutal Crusader knights, but the Church has always had an uneasy relationship with Dante, just as it has with his contemporary Meister Eckhart, neither of whose views are fully accepted as doctrinal.

Sheep Among Wolves

When the missionaries are being escorted into Burma by Rambo, we see something more of the character of Michael. When Sarah engages Rambo in conversation, Michael obviously feels threatened, and tells her to leave him alone, ostensibly to "give the man his space." Michael, whose pseudo-spirituality is base and filled with petty resentment, senses at the animal level that Rambo is more virile than he, more powerful, and is doubtless worried about his fiancé talking to him.

Like the priests in Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*, Michael uses his morality as a weapon to reproach the stronger man, to attempt to instill in him a sense of guilt and shame. While Rambo and the missionaries are traveling upriver into Burma, they encounter a group of Burmese pirates, who stop them at gunpoint and demand that they hand over Sarah in exchange for safe passage. Rambo assesses the situation in the heat of the moment, and with lightning-fast reflexes shoots and kills the four pirates. Michael, rather than being grateful to him for saving his life and the life of his fiancé, appears indignant and scolds him. *"What did you do?! Who are you to decide?"*

Rambo grabs him by the throat and throws the question back in his face. "Who are *you*? They would have raped her fifty times and killed all of you." The turning back of the question on Michael — "Who are *you*?" — is significant, for as we see later, he does not know himself. In the final battle of the film, after the missionaries have been rescued and are fleeing from the Burmese military, Michael grabs a rock and uses it to bludgeon a soldier to death. In the expression on his face after the killing, we see his horror at this part of himself which was heretofore denied and repressed.

When they arrive in Burma after the encounter with the pirates, Michael tells Rambo, in his schoolmarmish voice, "I'm going to have to report this," which in itself is disingenuous since he says "I have to" rather than "I will, I am going to," as though it is not his choice, when in fact it is. But he is unable or unwilling to take responsibility for his actions, and does not understand a man like Rambo who can make and execute decisions, so he hides behind his moral code. "I know you think what you did was right," he says, "but taking a life is never right." Rambo has nothing to say to him.

Sarah then comes to say goodbye. She is confused and does not know what to say. She undoubtedly partly agrees with Michael, since they share the same religion. But she also must feel a sense of gratitude to Rambo, for it is she who would have suffered the worst fate of all of them, and it was she who convinced him to take them in the first place because she alone was able to reach him in some way. She gives him her necklace with a small cross on it, as a token of gratitude and also as a prayer for his troubled soul.

Afterwards, Rambo returns to the scene of the crime and douses the pirates' ship and the dead bodies with gasoline and burns them. As he does this, scenes of the killings play back in his mind. He is conflicted about what he has done. Perhaps Michael's reproach did affect him after all. He discards his trademark survival knife on the burning boat, disgusted with himself.

"Become Who You Are"

In a pivotal scene, Rambo dreams a flashback sequence which illustrates his existential dilemma. As scenes from the first three films flash against the backdrop of a thunderstorm, we hear Rambo fighting with himself. "What am I?" Then he yells out, "You made me this way!" Is he reproaching God? Colonel Trautman, his mentor? Himself?

Then we hear the voice of Colonel Trautman

saying, "When are you going to come full circle, John? You're always going to be tearing away at yourself until you come to terms with what you are." These lines from Trautman are taken from *Rambo III*, which actually prefigures some of the themes of the fourth.

In the third film, Rambo is also living in Thailand, where he has presumably moved after the events in Vietnam in *First Blood Part II*. At the beginning of the film, Trautman arrives there to find Rambo engaged in a brutal stick-fighting match. He wins the fight, of course, and Trautman then sees Rambo give the money he has won to the Buddhist monks at a monastery where he is helping them build a stupa. (Likewise, at the beginning of *John Rambo*, we see his boat crew donating a fish they have caught to a boat of monks passing by.) When Trautman confronts Rambo about what he is doing, Rambo says that he likes this place (the monastery) and he likes these people (the monks) and he likes belonging to something. Trautman replies, "You do belong to something, but it's not this, even if you wish that it was."

Here Rambo symbolizes the spiritual turn to the East that many Westerners have made in the last hundred and especially the last fifty years. Buddhism, as a still-living tradition and furthermore as a tradition with Indo-European origins, has a lot of appeal for white people, some of which is unconscious. (Many people think of Buddhism as an Eastern tradition unrelated to themselves, and so their initial attraction is more due to xenophilia. But at a deeper level, I think they recognize something spiritually familiar.) Yet the adoption of Buddhism or other Eastern traditions by Westerners is fraught with problems, because of the state of spiritual, cultural and racial amnesia that many people are in. Like Rambo, they are attempting to "lose themselves" in something which is indeed genuinely beautiful and profound, but which is not theirs, and never will be unless and until they know their true selves. Colonel Trautman's words should be addressed to Western man in general in the present day and age: You're always going to be tearing away at yourself — with self-reproach, with guilt and its concomitant false humility — until you come to terms with what you are.

"And what is that?" Rambo asks him.

"A full-blooded combat soldier." Trautman unhesitatingly replies. He then tells Rambo the story of a sculptor who was praised for his great work, but the sculptor denied that he had done anything; he merely removed the pieces that were covering what was there all along. The implication is that Rambo was born, not made. (Interestingly, this directly contradicts Trautman's statement in the first film, in which he says, "God didn't make Rambo — I did.") He is a warrior because that is his biological and spiritual orientation, his vocation, not his "socially constructed role." (Jonathan Bowden: "You're born to be what you are.")

Rambo's flashback dream ends with Colonel Trautman calling his name. "John. John Rambo." But as he awakes, he realizes that it is not Trautman in the dream who is calling his name, but a priest, Arthur Marsh, who has come to see him about the fate of the missionaries.

Colonel Trautman was almost a guru figure for Rambo, the man who initiated him into the ways of the warrior. But now the warrior has reached a later stage in life. Even great warriors like Rambo eventually become old men, and combat will no longer be suitable for them. In the Vedic tradition of ancient India, a man must first fulfill his worldly dharma, or vocation, and should then pursue spiritual practice after he has been successful in the world and has sired a family. This understanding was also present in ancient Japan, where aging samurai would often become Buddhist monks and spend the remainder of their life in meditation. Both Yamamoto Tsunetomo, the author of the *Hagakure*, and Miyamoto Musashi, Japan's greatest swordsman, followed this path.

Does the transition from the voice of Colonel Trautman to that of a priest signify a similar transition ahead for Rambo? Perhaps, but not yet in the events of this film, for the warrior still has a mission that he must fulfill, just as Arjuna must arise and fight in the *Gita*. (This essay was first written before the fifth Rambo film; I was disappointed that Stallone opted for "still a tough guy at 70" rather than having him become a Trautman figure for a younger warrior. But maybe there is still time …)

Pastor Marsh informs Rambo that the missionaries have been taken prisoner by the Burmese army, and that because the U.S. government cannot do anything about it, he has hired a group

of mercenaries to go in and rescue them. He wants Rambo to take the mercenaries to the place where he dropped off Michael, Sarah and the others.

At this point there are two different scenes, from the theatrical version and the director's cut. In the theatrical version, the next scene shows Rambo forging a knife for his mission (a contrast to his trademark survival knife from the first three films) while his internal monologue plays overhead. "You know what you are. War is in your blood. When you're pushed, killing's as easy as breathing."

In the director's cut, the internal monologue is absent, some of its words instead being used in the dialogue between Rambo and Sarah. In its place is a scene in which Rambo asks the priest to say a prayer before he embarks on his mission — "not for me, for them." The prayer that is chosen is significant; it is the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled,
as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.

As we hear the voice of Pastor Marsh reciting this prayer, we see Rambo forging his weapon and preparing for battle. The juxtaposition of one of the most pacifistic prayers in the world and one of the most violent men in the world is striking, and raises the question, "How can a man of war be an instrument of the Lord's peace?"

There isn't a simple or easy answer to that question, at least not within Christianity. What Stallone seems to be reaching for in this film is a kind of Heroic Christianity, which incorporates the warrior ethos into the framework of Christian morality and spirituality, and which gives a more explicit recognition of warrior virtues. This basically boils down to a quadripartite view of humanity: There are the good-and-strong, the good-but-weak, the evil-but-weak, and the evil-and-strong. The evil-but-weak are of little consequence. The good-but-weak are good, and valuable as such, but need defending from the evil-and-strong, and that defense is the role of the good-and-strong. It is essentially the same worldview laid out by one of Grossman's interviewees in *On Killing*, which divides men into sheep, wolves, and sheepdogs. This was later dramatized to great effect in a scene in Clint Eastwood's American Sniper.

The notion that good and evil are real, objective forces which are in perpetual struggle, and that man's role is to fight for and with good against evil, is an ancient Indo-European idea. Hans F.K. Gunther writes, "The Indo-Europeans … have to struggle continuously between on the one hand, the divine will, which strives to shape and introduce order into nations for the enhancement of every living thing, and between, on the other hand, a will hostile to God, which brings disintegration and distortion of form and the destruction of all seed on the other. …Mitgard, the universal order of life, preserves and renews itself only through the brave and the constant struggle of men and Gods against the powers hostile to the Divine order, against Utgard. Mitgard is the harmonious ordering of human honour and the divine laws."

This view is fully present in Persian Zoroastrianism, and has always been a strong undercurrent in Christianity. It is the Christ who said that He came not to bring peace, but a sword; the Christ who returns in Revelations to lead the final battle against the forces of darkness, like the warrior-king Gesar in Tibetan traditions. When Jesus says that a man has no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends, that is a sentiment that most every combat soldier can relate to.

There are no shortage of doctrines and scriptural quotations that can be used to bolster the idea of Heroic Christianity. The problem is that for every one of them, there is another verse that is interpreted to mean the opposite, which the sickly priest always has on hand to shame the warrior for his strength and vocation. Although theologians and philosophers have offered up dif-

ferent interpretations of the famous injunctions to "resist not evil" and "turn the other cheek," the common understanding of them remains pacifistic and opposed to any active fight against evil. What this has meant in practice, as Nietzsche showed so well, is that it favors a tendency to *passively* "fight," to be passive-aggressive and underhanded rather than direct and confrontational — a rather perverted way to be "harmless as doves but wise as serpents." The character of Michael is truly one of the great portrayals of this type. According to Rene Guenon and the Traditionalist school, the warrior caste should be subservient to the priestly caste, and this ensures its connection to the divine. But what happens when the priestly caste degenerates and becomes full of weak, delusional men like Michael? This is the question which Nietzsche faced head on.

The Theology of Power

Christianity has long upheld the Good, the True and the Beautiful as attributes of God that are manifest in the world, by which He can be known. But it has had a much more ambivalent view of another of God's attributes: Power. Whereas striving towards goodness and truth and beauty all have their proper place in the Christian path, striving towards power is usually seen as a satanic pursuit.

But here again, what appears to be a problem within Christianity actually has its roots in the larger Indo-European spiritual tradition. The grouping of the Good, the True and the Beautiful has its origins in ancient Greece, where men extolled the *Kalos'kagathos* — the beautiful and good. Later the notion of *aletheia* — truth — was added to this, presumably due to the influence of Platonism and its emphasis on the quest for truth. Gunther writes, "The might or power of which the Indo-Europeans had a presentiment, this unity of the deity was split up by thinkers in the realm of human experience into the trinity of 'The Good, the True and the Beautiful', but in such a way that these ideas or words remained close neighbors in Hellas. Here and there with the later Hellenic-Roman thinkers the true could easily be understood as the good and beautiful, *aletheia* could signify both intellectual truth as well as moral truth, and in the *kalok'agathia* the ideal of sifting and selection, of *eugeneia* or human disciplined choice bodily beauty and moral fitness, and virtue (*arete*) became linked with one another. Since Plato's *Banquet*, Indo-European thinkers have recognized truth, beauty and virtue as life values which have pointed beyond the realm of experience to the divine, to the *brahman*, or the concept of *Das Gott* (neuter) – to a deity which through truth rendered the thinking man capable of knowledge."

According to Gunther, then, Power is actually the unity of the Good, the True and the Beautiful in traditional Indo-European thought. Power that is divorced from these is therefore lacking or distorted, just as with any of these ideas or ideals separated from the others. The tripartite unity of Power manifests as Justice. Just or righteous action is good, true and beautiful, which is why we instinctively cheer when the bad guys get what is coming to them, just as we instinctively are repulsed by their brutality and cruelty — it is neither good nor beautiful. The action in *John Rambo* is a prime illustration of these principles: you need only contrast the feeling you have watching the Burmese soldiers torturing and killing the innocent vs. the feeling you have watching Rambo cut down those same soldiers. They got what was coming to them. It's violent, and beautiful. Because it's Good.

To some degree all action movies are based on this dynamic. We love watching the good guys win, and watching the bad guys get vanquished by good men who are stronger. What separates *John Rambo* is the explicit religious framework in the story. The vision of Heroic Christianity presented in the film is neither comprehensive nor complete — it's an action film, not a *summa theologica*, meant to entertain more than to edify. But art often has a way of bypassing the intellect to get to the heart of things, and in its own way, this film presents these core issues of action and contemplation, violence and compassion, warriorship and spirituality.

This is an excerpt from a larger essay to be published in book form.

I am not perfect. Time to
end my life.

FiCtioN

COLD WATER, THIRSTY SOULS

fiction by **GLADIATOR**

In the near future, water — and faith — are scarce commodities.

"Feel God's love! Die of thirst as repenting atonement and be saved! Accept His punishments as your absolution! His judgment, and His alone, will –"

Crack!

Security's baton crunched into the doomsayer's skull and sent his head bouncing off the sidewalk. Blood seeped into the crumbling cement as the security team dragged him away.

Fitz didn't care for the religious fanatics, but security didn't have to be so rough.

"They say there's plenty of water left, it's all just dammed up the river somewhere in Arizona so they can keep it for themselves," a man said somewhere farther up in line.

"Really? I thought Colorado didn't let it flow out of state because they've had a snow drought the last few years," someone argued back.

"Easy, blow up the dam," another gruff voice chimed in.

"Next," the dried-out captain yelled.

Everyone shuffled through the snaking ration line and Fitz felt a tap on his shoulder. He turned and saw Kyle Green – a much thinner Kyle Green than the man he had served with in Iran.

"Hey Fitz!" Kyle exclaimed. "How've you been? I had no idea you were living in California, these days. Sorry I kind of dropped off the radar after Tehran. Seems like neither of us strayed too far from base, huh?"

A few short years ago, Kyle would have died for Fitz and Fitz would have done the same for him. Kyle was drying out, like every-

body else.

"Something like that. Once a marine, always a marine, right?" Fitz said. "Your knee ever get back up to speed?"

Kyle nodded. "Well enough. Doesn't seem to matter much now that we're both stuck in the ration line like everyone else. How's Sheryl?"

"Great except for the morning sickness. We've got number two on the way."

Kyle was stunned. "Congrats!" He stammered. "How can you guys afford that? You buying extra rations? Rooming with another family? Telling the law grandpa's still alive to keep his extra liters, or what?"

Fitz threw a quick lie. "I'm just getting along with less." He knew it was bad as it rolled off his tongue. The only guy in line who still had elastic skin was getting along with less.

Kyle saw through it. "Sure you didn't sell all your nine-mil? Thought you'd never get rid of was that stock pile."

"Still got plenty of nine-mil."

"You wanna go shoot some time? Debbie could bring over Douggie and our little ones can play while we had a boys date. We'd have to promise Deb and Sheryl they'd get a day of their own when we would watch the kids, but you know what I mean. There's a great range not far from here that gives a fat veterans discount."

"Why don't you give me your number and I'll call you when I finally get some time off. Might be able to squeeze in a day before number two is born." Fitz hoped he could get ahead of Kyle's questions.

"Tell you what," Kyle said, "I've heard that there may be a few gallons that fall off a truck tonight. Intersection of Magnolia and Cahuenga. Why don't we swing by there tonight and then go straight to the range first thing in the morning. Bring your guns and we won't have to double back to pick them up." Kyle said in a coy attempt to recruit a well-watered warrior to liberate some gallons for the both of them.

But Fitz already knew about the truck, just not the intersection. "Thanks, but I can't. Night shift," Fitz said.

"Okay, Fitz. See you soon."

The line moved forward and Fitz handed over his ticket to the captain and took his pallet of water. He watched Kyle brooding in line and dragged his pallet over to him. Maybe a few extra gallons could keep him out of trouble tonight. "Kyle, take five gallons for Deb and your little guy."

"Fitz, come on, man. You've got number two on the way."

"Like I said, I'm getting along with less. Take the water and don't worry about the chaos of scraping for a few stolen gallons off that truck tonight. Let's meet up here, same time next week, and we can talk. We might have some openings at my job and I'm sure I could get you an interview." Fitz plopped the five-gallon-jug at Kyle's feet.

Everyone in line was staring at the two of them. If Kyle didn't take the jug there would be a riot over Fitz's extra water. The captain eyed them both, giving them a minute before he had Fitz arrested and thrown out.

"Thanks, Fitz," Kyle said as he put the water on his sled.

"Same day next week. Let's meet here early, okay?"

"Yeah." Kyle kept his mouth shut as Fitz walked away.

Fitz hoped Kyle would stay home tonight.

***

"And Frodo volunteered to take the ring," Fitz said as he closed the book.

"Why, daddy?" Charlotte asked, sitting wide awake in her bed.

"Because sometimes we have to do things that we don't want to so we can protect the people we love."

"How?"

"When Frodo takes the ring, he's going to destroy it and stop all the bad guys from hurting anyone else."

"Do you stop bad guys, daddy?"

Fitz took a deep breath. "I make sure we have a house, and food, and water. I do everything I can to protect you and mommy."

"From bad guys?"

"From all the bad things I can. Making sure you have a house and food and water is the most important thing."

"Which bad guys are trying to take the food and water?" Charlotte asked.

"Lots of people are trying to figure out how to get enough water and food for everybody. Maybe one day you'll be the one to get food and water to everyone because you're so smart."

"The tanks were reinforced because the poachers had recently taken to the idea that if they weren't getting the water then no one would"

Charlotte's eyes lit up with the possibility. "Really?"

"Yep. You could save the world with your brain. But, you've got to keep your brain strong and to do that you have to go to sleep. Go to sleep, save the world. Sound Good?"

Without so much as a goodnight, Charlotte hurled herself under her covers and squeezed her eyes shut.

Fitz kissed her forehead and whispered, "I love you." He walked the short hall into the kitchen and living room to suit up. As quietly as he could, he took his rifle from the coat closet and pulled out its empty magazine. He gathered his other mags and clicked in round after round of ammo.

Sheryl walked out of the darkness of the hall and into the light of the kitchen.

"Sorry, didn't mean to wake you," Fitz said.

She glanced at Fitz's gun and body armor on her way to the pantry.

"Just thirsty," she said. Her eyes avoided him as she opened the false wall and grabbed one of their secret gallons of water. "Be careful tonight, okay?"

"Of course."

"This isn't worth your life, you know," Sheryl said as she poured herself a glass of water.

"I know," Fitz said. Nothing paid like this and certainly nothing else had the water benefits. Who else wanted an ex-soldier? Police? Get paid less to do essentially the same thing and be hated by society. No. He knew he needed a new skill set, but nothing was so lucrative.

There was a knock at the door.

Fitz clicked the magazine into his rifle and chambered a round as he approached the peephole. He put his eye to the small, dirty lens and saw a dark, blurry man. It was Woz, pistol holstered and towing a box labeled "solar panels" on a sled at his side. Fitz swung the door open for him.

"Ten gallons, buddy. Let's move." Woz pushed the sled inside and peeled back the top of the box – ten more gallons of water for the house.

Sheryl snuck back into the darkness as Fitz and Woz hauled the water into the secret compartment in the pantry. "I thought it was twenty gallons," Fitz remarked.

"New policy. Half now, half after," Woz said.

"Great." Fitz rolled his eyes. "When did that happen?"

"Monday," Woz commiserated. "Bag your gun and let's go."

Fitz tossed his gun, ammo, and body armor into a duffle bag and left the house, quietly locking the door behind him.

***

Fitz slept most of the way to San Bernardino and woke up in the mountains on the way out to the tanker trucks. Two tankers were at the pumping station tonight, each getting a final armor check. The tanks were reinforced because the poachers had recently taken to the idea that if they weren't getting the water then no one would. It made for a slower convoy and a lot more opportunities to get hit.

Logen, balding and eternally frustrated, was doing the armor check and inspecting the welds on the V-shields of the undercarriages. Those redirected most of the energy from any IED blasts away from the belly of the tanks. Logen also planned the routes the trucks would take.

Braced for Logen's annoyance, Fitz approached. "Logen, when did you plan this route?"

"Busy," Logen retorted as he shook his dying flashlight at a spot weld.

"I think it's compromised." Fitz said.

"Of course it is. They all are."

Fitz checked for anyone listening. Everyone else was gearing up and putting on their uniforms and body armor.

"I heard that we're going to get hit at Magnolia and Cahuenga."

"Guess you'll be ready for it, then."

"Can't you change the route? Send a scout ahead or something?" Fitz asked.

"Isn't your job to engage in these types of things?"

"My job is to get the water there safely."

"Look, if someone is selling the route I don't want them to know that we know. We'll dig them out soon enough." Logen said.

"I don't want to wait around for 'soon enough', Logen."

"Highly doubt it's anyone on the line with you guys tonight. Benefit of standardized uniforms. Their contact would have no way of telling them apart from anyone else. Just keep an eye out for anyone acting squirrely and use your best judgment. See you in a few hours." Logen clapped Fitz on the shoulder and moved on to the next truck.

Fitz climbed into the back of the van, an armored Humvee, and sat on the hard bench sandwiched between two other operators. He was across from Woz and two more operators, their legs interlocked like a zipper. Six operators per van, two dozen operators plus the six drivers making thirty guns pulling twelve-thousand gallons of water. The caravan pulled out. Lead van and then Fitz's van as the spear, two water tankers, then two follow vans. Fitz closed his eyes and slept again.

***

He opened his eyes when they pulled off the two-ten and into Burbank. They were taking Magnolia out to North Hollywood where they would branch off into side streets and make their way up into the hills. Burbank was quiet. The rows of thrift stores, post houses, and memorabilia shops passed in an endless loop. Woz played with his laser sight, clicking it on and off. Everyone in the van was bored. If anyone in his van had sold the route, they were playing it very, very cool.

Burbank Avenue was ahead.

"Guys," Fitz said. "I heard we're gonna get hit at Cahuenga."

"Bullshit," Woz said.

Fitz peered out a murder hole to watch for any signs of trouble.

Woz saw how serious Fitz was and clicked on his laser sight. "Fuck." The other operators turned on their FLIR goggles. Woz leaned over to the driver's comm-window and said, "Reyes, be on the lookout for –"

Tires squealed and the lead van careened into a telephone pole just ahead of them at the south-west corner of Magnolia and Cahuenga.

A hard rain of bullets poured onto the convoy. Fitz's driver slammed on the gas to push through the intersection. Explosives detonated just behind their front axle and knocked their back wheels off – scraping the van along the asphalt until it ground its way into the curb.

Two vans down.

"Out!" Woz yelled.

The caboose operator punched the escape button and blew off the rear hatch in a dense puff of smoke, hiding the operators as they poured out. Fitz raised his rifle and fired on the highlighted silhouettes, illuminated by FLIR, and watched them fall with each report of his rifle. His viewfinder showed the glowing weapons and neon silhouettes dropping to the ground.

Fitz prowled out of the smoke and saw that the tanker had slowed to a crawl, waiting for the first follow van to take the lead. More bullets whizzed by, punching into the concrete and asphalt around him. Fitz took cover behind the moving tanker, keeping in step with its crawl.

Another wave of poachers swarmed in behind Fitz. Leading them was Kyle, with his centuries-old hunting rifle swinging up to aim at Fitz's disguised face. But Kyle was weak from dehydration and weary from fighting so hard every night. He was slow to aim, slow to his trigger. Fitz gave him the kindness of a single round through his bad knee and dropped him out of the fight. One of his lieutenants bent down to help him up. Fitz cracked off another round and obliterated the lieutenant's orbital bones, pouring the man's brains onto Kyle's face. The lieutenant's body crumpled over Kyle and knocked him flat, out of harm's way.

Other poachers descended in a herd of two dozen. The ones who couldn't find cover fast enough were shot through by the operators in their secured positions. But the poachers now outnumbered the operators nearly three to one and they were focusing their efforts on the crashed lead van. Two operators, Simms and Hurley, held tight to its side panels, completely pinned down. Simms took a bullet in his back plate and knocked him off his feet, sending him right into Hurley and nudged him out of cover. A bullet struck Hurley's helmet and blood showered

into his eyes. He screamed, blinded by blood, and was punched through by the guns of thirsty, howling men.

The caboose van zipped past Fitz and swung up to the lead position.

Fitz grabbed onto the tanker as it kicked into gear. He popped off covering fire toward the advancing poachers, slowing their advance.

Another operator, Wilson, was crawling out the back hatch, over the bodies Hurley and Simms.

Holding tight to the tanker, Fitz leaned as low and grabbed Wilson by his body armor, dragging him along the street. Using all his strength, Fitz hefted him onto the back platform.

"Can you hang on?" Fitz shouted. Wilson nodded and wrapped his arms around the back ladder as Fitz returned fire at the poachers.

Wilson clenched his teeth and grunted as the tanker rattled through the streets.

"It was Grassmick. He shot Dougherty and steered us right into that post. Fucker. I got him before I crawled out."

The convoy barreled through North Hollywood and climbed up the hills. The operators clinging to the sides of the tankers were on high alert as the convoy snaked up the tight switchbacks toward the peaks. If the poachers knew the route, there was nothing stopping them from hiding in the hills. Woz's laser swept through the darkness.

The convoy pulled up to an iron gate and a winding driveway nestled between two tall guard towers. Spotlights blazed onto the vans and the tankers. Everyone waited in silence as the delivery was being confirmed on chain. Fitz's arms burned from holding onto the truck for the last ten miles, all uphill, but knew if he moved an inch that everyone in those guard towers would smoke him. They might waste the whole convoy. "Three hundred bucks, twenty gallons. Three hundred bucks, twenty gallons," Fitz reminded himself. The gate slid open and they were waved in.

At the mansion, the tankers pumped themselves dry into the billionaire's holding cistern and his people tipped everyone with a liter. The billionaire's woman, whoever she was, swam naked in their elevated glass pool above the convoy. She looked like she was flying above them, an angel of judgment. She peered down at the little people below who kept the shower running.

Fitz crammed into the lead van with Woz and the extra operators. He tried to sleep as the rising sun began to cook their steel box. He found no comfort.

***

Ten more gallons, each disguised as a box of solar-repair equipment, were given to the operators at the pump house after they changed back into civilian clothes. Woz took Fitz home and helped him push his box inside. Sheryl ate her breakfast with Charlotte and the little girl scrambled out of her seat to hug her father.

"Daddy!" Charlotte squealed. "I had a dream I helped you stop bad guys. We would stop them all, right, daddy?"

Fitz lifted her up. "I think it would be better if we could help people instead of stop bad guys, don't you? Don't you want to help people?"

"I want to be like you and Frodo. He helped people by stopping bad guys – like you."

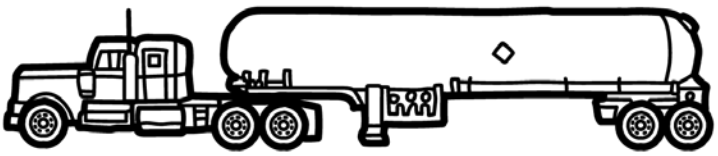
"If we could help everyone there would be no more bad guys. That's the best thing you could do. If we could help everyone, daddy wouldn't need to leave for work anymore and we could play together all day every day. So, let's not worry about how to stop bad guys, but how to help people, okay?"

"Okay."

"Promise?"

"I promise, daddy."

Gladiator is @gladiator2149 on Twitter.



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TECHNOLOGICAL POSSESSION

essay by **WERNER VON BRAWN**

Technology is the worst thing to have ever happened to the human race. I am qualified to say this because I spend 18 hours a day in front of a computer. But many of those who are not so well acquainted as I with the alchemical properties of the internet do not yet realise this.

Technology is an insidious force. It beguiles us with promises of "convenience." It ensnares us with the so-called "utility" of being able to create cultural bonds with like-minded individuals whom we would otherwise never meet. It traps us within artificial mazes haunted by the electrostatic cries of broken promises.

"Did you know that when you talk to someone on the internet, you're not really talking to them?"

Yes, despite enriching our lives and understanding of the world in every way, the internet is actually very bad for you. Consider this: did you know that when you talk to someone on the internet, you're not really talking to them? It may look like you're talking to them, it may feel like you're talking to them but you aren't actually actually talking to them, are you? Actually? That book you downloaded from the effervescent siren portal you call Z-Lib? It's not actually real. Did you see any paper anywhere? It doesn't count. Sorry, you thought you were reading Kant? Kant never even existed. You were lied to. Digitally.

"The rhizomatic network of interconnected nodes reaches across the noosphere like a dark squid of control"

And what's worse, it's all part of a worldwide plot to imprison humanity in a virtual prison. Which also isn't real - but just because it isn't real doesn't mean it isn't there.

In our fight, we face an unseen adversary. An inhuman enemy that exists everywhere, and nowhere. But to find the origins of this sinister entity, we have to look deep into the past. Specifically to 1997.

When you think about it, the signs were already there. The rhizomatic network of interconnected nodes reaches across the noosphere like a dark squid of control. A squid whose sole purpose is to turn you into a tentacle in its own sinister games.

The first and earliest stages of the plot were already being conceived in the early stages of the 19th century. The greatest thinkers of that age were already possessed by a Faustian desire to bring human society to a higher level, to bind humans together, if you like.

But the plan wasn't really set in motion until the closing days of World War 2.

Between 1945 and 1959, the US Government recruited 1,600 German scientists, engineers, and technicians. Officially, the US's priorities were German rocket engineering, synthetic rubber, and field radios. But this initiative laid the foundation for a demonic presence to enter the world. A presence unlike anything that had come before it. A presence dedicated to making electronic simps of us all.

One of the most common depictions in esoterica from across time and space, mind and memory is that demons are summoned by specific rituals and behave according to specific patterns. Much like all technology, they are insidious. They play nice at first. They beguile you with false promises of help achieving goals or completing tasks that you very much desire to see completed.

And in appearing harmless and genial, by offering you the easy way out, they inexorably gain a hold on your soul. Slowly but surely, you become unable to operate without demonic intervention, abusing the gifts offered to you with ever greatening sadism and destructive potency. It starts with an innocent Google search. It ends with you engaged in enthusiastic ten hour long auto-erotic asphyxiation sessions to AI-generated OnlyFans demons. Don't say I didn't warn you.

Computers are, of course, the perfect vehicle for virtual demonic possession - which is, as we will soon discover, an all-too-real phenomenon. Because the people who Operation Paperclip brought into the US helped open a space-time-matter portal through which very real demons entered our reality and now torture us through the medium of liquid crystal display screens by letting us access information and talk to other people – something of course which was impossible for most of human history.

Of course, such a threat will not appear threatening. It will hide in plain sight. It will make itself appear harmless - perhaps even a figure of mockery. All the better to pass unnoticed in the fiberoptic cables of the information super-squid. All the better to steal your essence and reach through the screen to give itself form in the material realm while making us ever more dependent on the electromagnetic siren-song of the information super highway.

But those of us who have dedicated ourselves to esoteric teachings know that for all their trickery, demons have one weakness: they must advertise themselves. They will make their presence felt, and will take on appearances that are both unnatural and twisted – a mockery of the natural beauty of God's own creation. The avatar of the projected consciousness of demonic cyber connected virtual gnosticism has been with us now for almost 30 years. Hiding in plain sight, on the very edge of our perception. But have you noticed him?

SPANDRELL
THE INTERVIEW

Interview by ASTRAL

Spandrell is one of the Neoreactionary triumvirate, along with Nick Land and Curtis Yarvin, whose concepts describe the workings of globohomo, and provide some estimation of how it may all play out. It's been 15 years since Yarvin started publishing Unqualified Reservations, *as Mencius Moldbug, and in that time these three have constructed an airtight conceptual framework for understanding our current predicament. If one wants to seriously consider "what is to be done" in the face of the spreading miasma of globohomo, one can find no better resource than these three thinkers (I might add Bronze Age Pervert to the list, though he isn't a proper Neoreactionary).*

With his concepts of "Bioleninism" and "IQ shredders," among others, we might say Spandrell "completes the system" of Neoreaction. What follows is an edited excerpt of an interview conducted on my substack. We discuss Neoreaction in context of the last several years, the way it's developed and its viability, as well as how some of his and Moldbug's concepts have held up against reality. We conclude that recent events amount merely to a playing out of Neoreactionary predictions: the things they observed about the way the modern progressive world works have become more true now than they were when the triumvirate first observed them.

Greetings Spandrell, and thank you for taking the time to discuss your ideas and answer a few questions. I noticed you returned to Twitter when Elon Musk took over. This discussion was prompted by my reevaluation of Neoreactionary ideas and perspectives in light of several developments over the last 2-3 years, one of them being Elon Musk entering the world of politics by purchasing Twitter and releasing the Twitter files. Tell us your thoughts on these developments, and whether or not this calls for a reconsideration of the concept of "The Cathedral."

Hi, my pleasure to talk to you. The Cathedral was a foundational theoretical concept in Neoreaction as it explained the informal nexus of power that controls what we now call GAE, i.e. USG and its vassals; and yes, the FBI basically ordering Twitter Inc. to ban accounts they didn't like absolutely proves its reality. The ostensible, written structure of the government has absolutely nothing to do with how power operates in practice.

It also proves my writing on the topic, as the particular way the FBI run its op with Twitter was with a gay agent sent to San Francisco to coordinate with Yoel Roth, an obvious, flamboyant, in-your-face, **public** gay pedo; so you have the bioleninism angle right there.

Then again, one problem with the "Cathedral" and the whole "Cthulhu always swims left" concept is that, well, Elon Musk bought Twitter. So it doesn't *always* swim left. The left does have setbacks now and then, and there's such a thing as a right-ward reaction. There's plenty in history too, and I've been discussing them with OGs from this sphere for years. I honestly didn't think they would let Musk buy it and spill the beans.

But part of the diffuse, informal character of the Cathedral is that it's hard for it to coordinate effectively against acute, fast counterattacks. They might lose battles now and then to wildcards like Elon; but in the end they always win the war, and we already see Elon cucking out: our guys are still getting suspended all the time, Elon got mogged in Qatar by Kushner... I'm not optimistic.

Yes, exactly, and that's exactly why I wanted to talk to you: the bioleninism aspect. We all already knew, but Musk proved it to us, that this was being perpetuated by women, browns, gays, trannies, and pedophiles. In that regard, and most others, I do consider recent events to be a playing out of everything you and Moldbug (and Nick Land and Bronze Age Pervert, for that matter) described and predicted in the previous two decades. It seems to me that the 2020's are the coming into being, the full fruition, of the NrX perspective.

To back up a minute, perhaps you'd like to give us a brief account of what bioleninism is? Can you give some examples that have arisen that bear out your insights since you published the original pieces?

Among the intellectual enemies of the left, there's basically two approaches to understanding what the left is.

The first, oldest and by far most common is the genealogical approach. Dare I call it the Boomer take on the left. Basically the idea is that the left of today is the descendant of the left of yore; there is a core tenet of the left, most people would say "egalitarianism", which arose in some particular point in history. Moldbug, who, for all his insight, is also a Boomer theorist in this topic, would say it goes back to the Puritans. Most normiecons would say it goes back to the French Revolution; the spiciest ones would perhaps say the Masons. The key idea here is that it's all very contingent: there's an army of bad people which goes back very far in time but they just have bad ideas and if we defeat them then we will win.

I disagree, vehemently. My take is that the "left" is just an evolutionary process. The left is whatever coalition of people wants to topple the existing political order; and the particular ideas they hold depends on the society they're trying to gain power in; back in the old Roman Republic the left was plebian agitators against the patricians, in Medieval Christian Europe it was the odd apocalyptic sect, then indeed (some) Protestants; in America the "patriots" against the British Crown (which Moldbug very famously pointed out, making one of his most important Matrix-breaking insights); in Revolutionary France it was the country lawyers against the nobility, etc. Eventually we got Socialism, then Marxism, which is still around.

That most anti-establishment political movements are egalitarian is not about some far-reaching inheritance of ideas; it's just an obvious take.

Clockwise from top: bioleninism in action; Curtis Yarvin; V.I. Lenin

Genghis Khan didn't conquer the world's largest empire because he was the heir of a long tradition of military genius. He created an effective fighting force from scratch because... it's not that hard. People are envious; hell, even chimps are envious. "We poor people should have more stuff" is a universally appealing rallying call in every social animal group.

Biological Leninism extends that insight into the modern era where the left isn't about taxing the rich and giving more money to coal miners. It's about people who are low status due to their biology: cripples, the mad, the stupid, the fat, the psychotic, sexual deviants, and ethnic minorities. This has been a fast enough change that even millennials have seen it happen in our lifetimes. Hell, "trans" as a political issue wasn't really a thing 10 years ago. Boomers still don't understand what's going on, they thought the left was about "ideas", and those "ideas" were, well, Marxist communism. No, the left is, and always has been, about taking status from people who have it and giving it to people who don't have it. In 500 BC, it was plebeians vs patricians, in 1500 it was about edgy monks vs Catholic bishops, in 1900 it was about factory workers vs rich industrialists, in 2020 it's about fat homosexuals vs straight white men. They even tell you right in your face who's the enemy: straight white men. Which is a plain biological description.

As for why the left exists, well, political movements need people. Lots of motivated, loyal people. The biggest way to encourage loyalty is to prom-

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ise status increases, and the promise of a status increase is most attractive the less you have of it. Straight white men with a proper IQ will always be able to get some status in life just because they're biologically performant people; they have little incentive to be loyal, so in a frontal political battle with low status freaks they will always lose. The morale just isn't there. This of course only applies to "open societies" where political parties are allowed to organize people. Leftist madness wasn't a thing during most of history where politics was a matter of a tiny elite with mostly familial or military ties, so they could defend themselves properly. Even today leftism is much less of a thing in places where access to politics is more restricted, even if nominally democratic such as e.g. Japan or most Muslim countries.

As for vindication, I wrote Bioleninism in late 2017. Do you see more or less freaks on TV these days? Did I anticipate Admiral Rachel Levine leading USG during COVID? You bet I did. Hell, the immediate rise to power of the most autistic, hypochondriac control freaks during the COVID years proves it all.

Yes I agree completely. Our very own Raw Egg Nationalist had a hit-piece written about him in which the author tried to make that case that he is - can you guess? - a fascist, and one of the example they gave to prove this was his review of all the antifa mug shots, which he used to exemplify bioleninism.

While it's certainly my belief that the people at the top are doing this on purpose, hurling massive hordes of biological refuse at the middle class as a way to smash its institutional power as a voting block, it doesn't appear to me to have been a targeted policy until about the time of Trump, despite many of the left's ideas going farther back than that. However, when we consider several factors, it becomes clear – to me at least – that this was not an idea that just popped into the heads of the elite in 2016. To take just three small examples, we have the immigration act, the closing of the mental institutions, and no-fault divorce. These three unrelated policies serve to create the conditions that exacerbate bioleninsim, and all three of them were done specifically as a way to undermine the white middle and working class through labor, rampant criminality, and empowerment of women (which of course means empowering them to take things men have earned). Is this simply the leftward trend of progressivism based on its ideals, or is this a decades-long deployment of a strategy meant to undermine the very caste that prevents bankers and investors from perpetuating their globalist schemes?

A long-standing debate in my circles is to what extent the whole left is "doing it on purpose". Do they know they're doing biological Leninism? How self-aware of their methods and their goals are they? In other words is there a central conspiracy where things get decided and commands are sent to the edges of the Cathedral? Or is it all "emergent", a semi-random bottom-up process where things still work because the incentives are aligned? We've been discussing this for over a decade. Short answer is... we don't know. Duh, we're not in power, of course we don't know. And the guys in power aren't dumb enough to let us know. All we can do is speculate, gather evidence here and there... The long answer is, IMO, that it's a bit of both. Fundamentally it's a bottom-up process: entrepreneurial leftists come up with stuff and whatever works for the movement as a whole sticks. Some things don't. Every few years there's some pedo academic piece of shit trying to make sex with toddlers legal. It never works, because a big part of the coalition (women) don't want it. Mostly because they don't want teenage women to be in the sexual marketplace, not because they care that much about the rape of toddlers by pedos (they sure didn't care when they legalized adoption by homosexual couples and the never ending scandals which ensued).

But there's also lots of centralized conspiracies. Not one central cabal, I'd say; but a variety of conspiracies do form very high up. The mRNA vaccine push was surely organized from above and well-greased with Pfizer money, say. "Trans" acceptance was mostly the result of 1 billion dollars in hard cash skillfully spent by James Nicholas Pritzker, that disgusting pervert, just in order to satisfy his kink. Think of it next time your daughter has to put up with a guy swinging his dick in the women's bathroom. But again, all conspiracies have to fit the narrative somehow for the coalition to get behind them. I don't remember the specifics but most likely your three examples were something like that: very random, contingent ideas of some well-con-

nected elite, maybe just one guy, who really wanted, say, no fault divorce to get rid of his wife; and as it fit the zeitgeist it just got accepted. Think of the English Reformation, very much the result of Henry VIII wanting to divorce his wife, with the added benefit of the seizing of the monasteries working to help his buddies get behind it. In an absolute monarchy, the "narrative" is the opinion of the king and his buddies; in a liberal democracy, the narrative that any political innovation has to fit is whether it facilitates the performance of the main political parties.

Certainly, that's how it seems to play out. It seems progressivism has a centripetal force that draws everything around it to itself, absorbing it into the progressive juggernaut destroying the West. I agree with you that there is little reason for optimism, nevertheless I want to ask if you have any opinions on what we can do in the meantime. On the one hand, I think of the reign of Julian the Apostate, who really did nothing to stem the tide of Christianity and its entropic effects on the Roman Empire, and lose hope for any small signs of life I see from the right. On the other hand, I know these things take time and, as Moldbug insists, building parallel institutions plays out over decades, not months. In that sense, I do have some hope, it seems as a cultural force, the right is becoming "cool" lately, and my outlook for the next decade isn't entirely bleak anymore.

Nobody is building "parallel institutions". Building institutions is hard work. And we all just wanna grill. We are very, very pissed that we can't just grill in peace. But that's about it. All we're doing is finding creative ways to grill unmolested, and we are smart people so we've been pretty good at that. God knows I have. But parallel institutions? You wanna be a bureaucrat, a cog in a big machine? Fuck that. Nobody likes that in normal circumstances, least of all now when every institution is gay. The sort of people we have are the disagreeable bastards who are the least suitable to manning large institutions. Having dank memes is nice but you can't build institutions with that.

I mentioned this in a recent podcast but the only thing we can do is make fucktons of money and breed like rabbits so that if we can't fix the software problem (our culture, rotten by bioleninism) we can at least solve the hardware problem (make better people and wait till the midwit normies meme themselves into biological extinction). For all his software supremacism, Mr. Yarvin seems to be actually doing the latter. As they say, watch what people do, not what they say. And Yarvin is doing k-selection. Which is based and redpilled.

The only "meantime" play we have that can produce enough dopamine to not get good people depressed and lethargic is go accelerationist. Work to have everything burn. Learn to code and make an AI which will say "nigger" on command. Learn to build and make beautiful houses with 3-feet thick walls that can withstand the next Waco siege. Just make money and bang women. Remember that "nationalism" is a psy-op by the leftists of the 19th century. Whatever nation you want to restore to greatness is populated by 90% midwit normies and even the right-wing ones, your potential allies, are the sort of people who buy Trump NFTs with Shutterstock watermarks.

Regarding the current state of bioleninism, let's consider the UK first, and then America. I was prompted to finally sit down and read your blog straight through (and the interview with Parallax Optics) when Rishi Sunak became the PM of England. The floodgates were already open, but this looked to me like some sort of endgame move, milking the Western European cash cow to death to feed the third world. Combine this with the EU kulaking Dutch farmers, it seems like Bioleninism is becoming codified and the globalists are going to bleed the West for everything it has left. What did you think when Sunak became PM? It's basically a WEF structural readjustment program…

(Spandrell's answer to this question went so incredibly hard that even Man's World blushed. You can find this interview in its entirety on my substack at astralflightsimulation.substack.com, along with many original essays by myself and podcast episodes with the likes of Raw Egg Nationalist (two, in fact), as well as Curtis Yarvin, and others featured in this very issue of Man's World.)

If you'd like to read further work from Spandrell, including the original three-part bioleninism essays and an interview with Parallax Optics (who made this interview happen - thanks Para!), visit www.spandrell.com.

Why settle for Raw Milk Nationalism when you can choose Breast Milk Nationalism? Breast Milk Nationalists are a misunderstood bunch. They've been painted in the press as deranged fetishists; many are body-builders looking for a nutritious but undoubtedly controversial supplement to add to their regimen. Breast Milk Enjoyer (@BreastMilkEnjyr) is a popular Twitter anon and bodybuilder who's published a piece in Spectator World, "Mother's milk is good for you," about his love for the elixir. "I was a locavore," he said. "I consumed only milk from my fellow bodybuilders' wives or sympathetic female friends." He tells us over DM:

"The heuristic to work towards in Breast Milk Nationalism is simple — practice that which produces nutritious, optimal breast milk. A happy and vigorous baby will grow rapidly on a diet of breast milk, from which he should feed for at least six months. As an aside, this is actually what our health authorities recommend — and fewer than 10% of women manage to do this. A real tragedy for the next generation.

Imagine, instead, a world oriented around the promotion of human greatness instead of endless moral scolding. A world structured around a cult of the body and athletic achievement, not petty status-striving or GDP maximization. Imagine a lean, strongly built young man. Specimens such as these are the backbone of this new culture of distinction. But how do we produce such a man? We must start at the beginning, in the circumstances of his birth. Start with the breast milk, and the rest will follow."

Related to Breast Milk Nationalism were various boob nationalisms — Big Boob Nationalism, Small Boob Nationalism — which sought to seize the instruments of state power in order to create a "lacto-state." Their bids for legitimacy failed, mostly due to excessive spamming and shitposting.

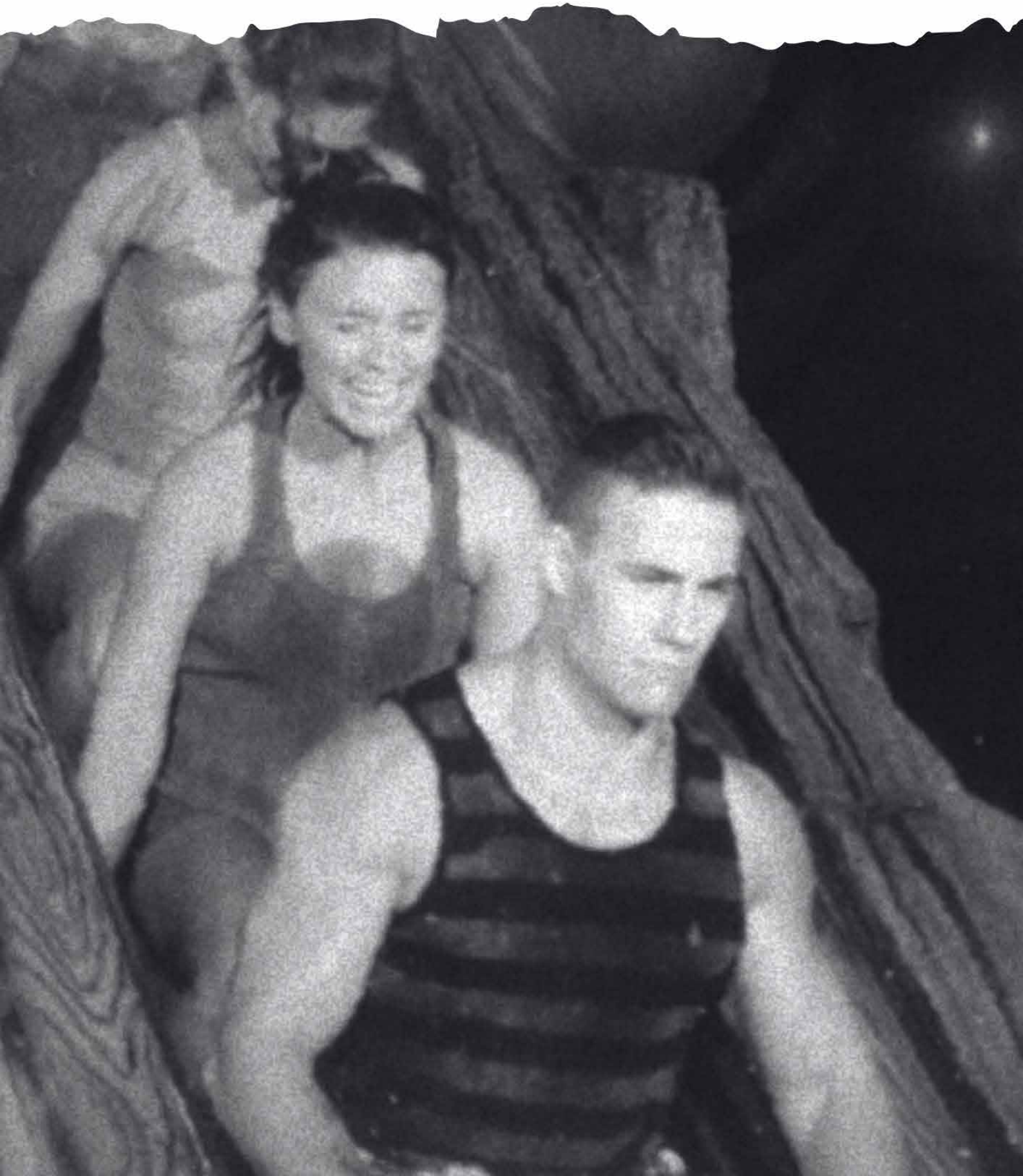
This is an excerpt from the Countere series on esoteric nationalisms, available at countere.com

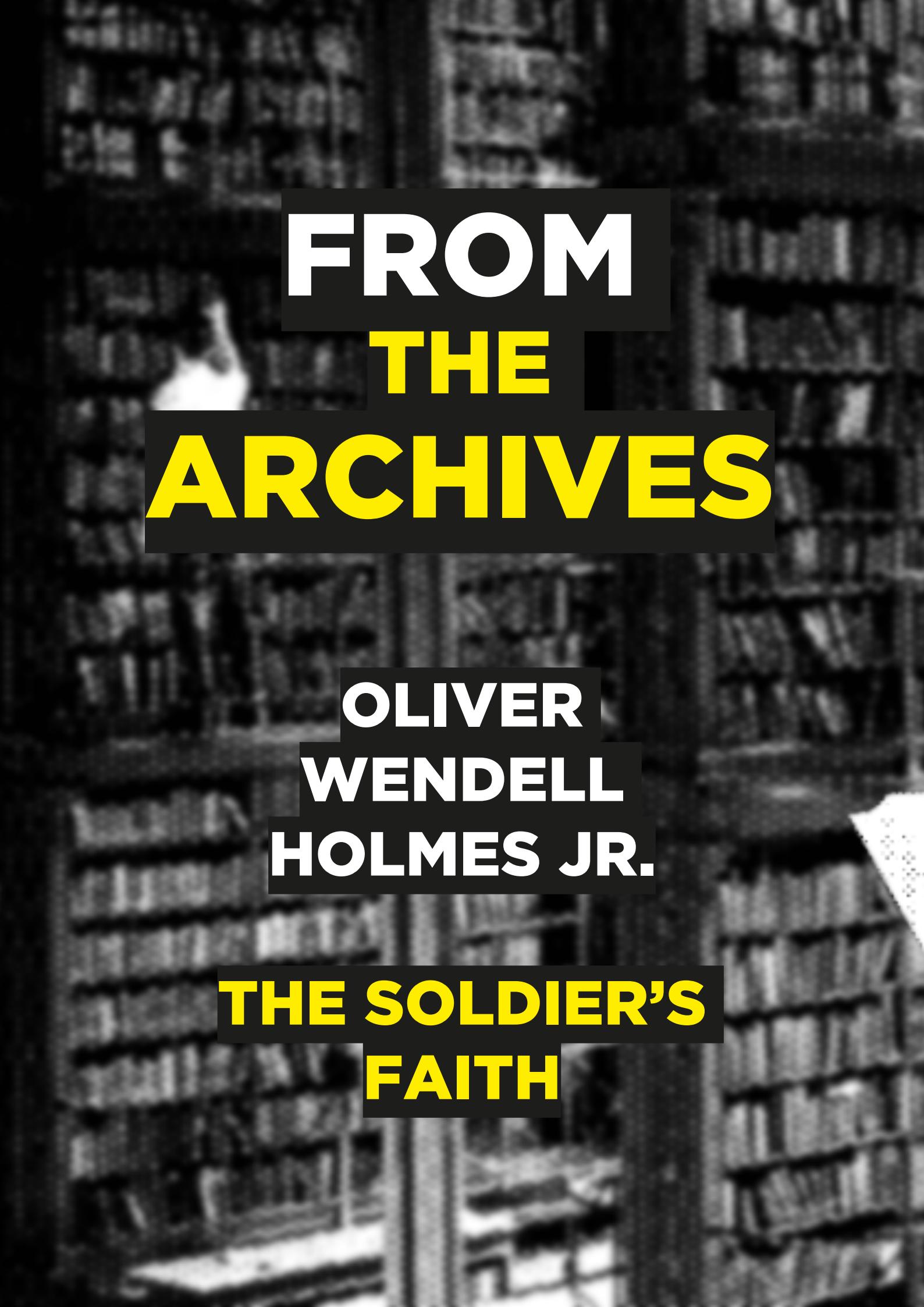
BREAST-MILK
NATIONALISTS

WHILE THE CUCK'S AWAY, THE BULL WILL PLAY.

Cuck Operator
Coffee Kompany

Just enjoy the ride.

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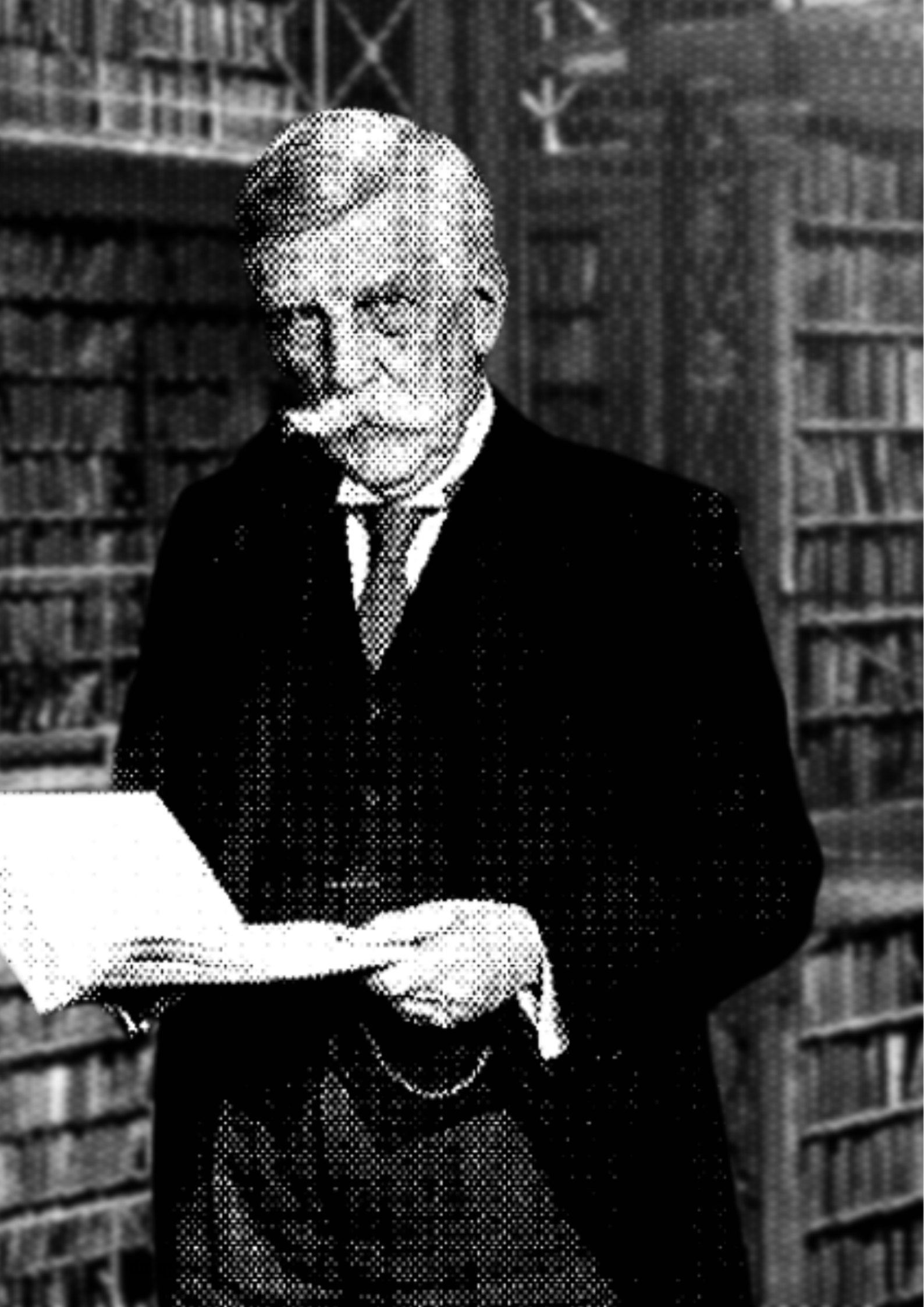


"The ideals of the past for men have been drawn from war"

Any day in Washington Street, when the throng is greatest and busiest, you may see a blind man playing a flute. I suppose that someone hears him. Perhaps also my pipe may reach the heart of some passer in the crowd.

I once heard a man say, "Where Vanderbilt sits, there is the head of the table. I teach my son to be rich." He said what many think. For although the generation born about 1840, and now governing the world, has fought two at least of the greatest wars in history, and has witnessed others, war is out of fashion, and the man who commands attention of his fellows is the man of wealth. Commerce is the great power. The aspirations of the world are those of commerce. Moralists and philosophers, following its lead, declare that war is wicked, foolish, and soon to disappear.

The society for which many philanthropists, labor reformers, and men of fashion unite in longing is one in which they may be comfortable and may shine without much trouble or any danger. The unfortunately growing hatred of the poor for the rich seems to me to rest on the belief that money is the main thing (a belief in which the poor have been encouraged by the rich), more than on any other grievance. Most of my hearers would rather that their daughters or their sisters should marry a son of one of the great rich families than a regular army officer, were he as beautiful, brave, and gifted as Sir William Napier. I have heard the question asked whether our war was worth fighting, after all. There are many, poor and rich, who think that love of country is an old wives' tale, to be replaced by interest in a labor union, or, under the name of cosmopolitanism, by a rootless self-seeking search for a place where the most enjoyment may be had at the least cost.

Meantime we have learned the doctrine that evil means pain, and the revolt against pain in all its forms has grown more and more marked. From societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals up

to socialism, we express in numberless ways the notion that suffering is a wrong which can be and ought to be prevented, and a whole literature of sympathy has sprung into being which points out in story and in verse how hard it is to be wounded in the battle of life, how terrible, how unjust it is that any one should fail.

Even science has had its part in the tendencies which we observe. It has shaken established religion in the minds of very many. It has pursued analysis until at last this thrilling world of colors and passions and sounds has seemed fatally to resolve itself into one vast network of vibrations endlessly weaving an aimless web, and the rainbow flush of cathedral windows, which once to enraptured eyes appeared the very smile of God, fades slowly out into the pale irony of the void.

And yet from vast orchestras still comes the music of mighty symphonies. Our painters even now are spreading along the walls of our library glowing symbols of mysteries still real, and the hardly silenced cannon of the East proclaim once more that combat and pain still are the portion of man. For my own part, I believe that the struggle for life is the order of the world, at which it is vain to repine. I can imagine the burden changed in the way it is to be borne, but I cannot imagine that it ever will be lifted from men's backs. I can imagine a future in which science shall have passed from the combative to the dogmatic stage, and shall have gained such catholic acceptance that it shall take control of life, and condemn at once with instant execution what now is left for nature to destroy. But we are far from such a future, and we cannot stop to amuse or to terrify ourselves with dreams. Now, at least, and perhaps as long as man dwells upon the globe, his destiny is battle, and he has to take the chances of war. If it is our business to fight, the book for the army is a war song, not a hospital sketch. It is not well for soldiers to think much about wounds. Sooner or later we shall fall; but meantime it is for us to fix our eyes upon the point to be stormed, and to get there if we can.

Behind every scheme to make the world over, lies the question: What kind of world do you want? The ideals of the past for men have been drawn from war, as those for women have been drawn from motherhood. For all our prophecies, I doubt if we are ready to give up our inheritance. Who is there who would not like to be thought a gentleman? Yet what has that name been built on but

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. (March 8 1841-March 6 1935) was an American jurist and scholar who served on the Supreme Court from 1902 to 1932. His legal career was exemplary, and he remains one of the most influential Supreme Court justices in American history.

Holmes Jr. was born in Boston, Masachusetts to the famous physician and writer Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. His family were Boston brahmins of the highest pedigree, part of a set that included such luminaries as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry James Sr. Holmes Jr. became friends with the brothers James, William (the philosopher) and Henry Jr. (the novelist) and was set on a literary career long before he reached Harvard, where he wrote philosophical essays and participated enthusiastically int eh college's social life and societies.

Holmes Jr. served through most of the Civil War on the Union side, reaching the rank of brevet colonel. After suffering a serious wound towards the close of the war, he returned to Harvard to study law. He practised commercial law in Boston for 15 years before becoming a state court judge.

"The Soldier's Faith" was given as a speech to the graduating class of Harvard in 1895. The speech is said to have so impressed Theodore Roosevelt that he decided to make Holmes Jr. a member of the Supreme Court when he became president.

the soldier's choice of honor rather than life? To be a soldier or descended from soldiers, in time of peace to be ready to give one's life rather than suffer disgrace, that is what the word has meant; and if we try to claim it at less cost than a splendid carelessness for life, we are trying to steal the good will without the responsibilities of the place. We will not dispute about tastes. The man of the future may want something different. But who of us could endure a world, although cut up into five acre lots, and having no man upon it who was not well fed and well housed, without the divine folly of honor, without the senseless passion for knowledge outreaching the flaming bounds of the possible, without ideals the essence of which is that they can never be achieved? I do not know what is true. I do not know the meaning of the universe. But in the midst of doubt, in the collapse of creeds, there is one thing I do not doubt, that no man who lives in the same world with most of us can doubt, and that is that the faith is true and adorable which leads a soldier to throw away his life in obedience to a blindly accepted duty, in a cause which he little understands, in a plan of campaign of which he has little notion, under tactics of which he does not see the use.

Most men who know battle know the cynic force with which the thoughts of common sense will assail them in times of stress; but they know that in their greatest moments faith has trampled those thoughts underfoot. If you wait in line, suppose on Tremont Street Mall, ordered simply to

Above: *The Oath of the Horatii*, Jacques-Louis David (1784)

wait and do nothing, and have watched the enemy bring their guns to bear upon you down a gentle slope like that of Beacon Street, have seen the puff of the firing, have felt the burst of the spherical case-shot as it came toward you, have heard and seen the shrieking fragments go tearing through your company, and have known that the next or the next shot carries your fate; if you have advanced in line and have seen ahead of you the spot you must pass where the rifle bullets are striking; if you have ridden at night at a walk toward the blue line of fire at the dead angle of Spotsylvania, where for twenty-four hours the soldiers were fighting on the two sides of an earthwork, and in the morning the dead and dying lay piled in a row six deep, and as you rode you heard the bullets splashing in the mud and earth about you; if you have been in the picket line at night in a black and unknown wood, have heard the splat of the bullets upon the trees, and as you moved have felt your foot slip upon a dead man's body; if you have had a blind fierce gallop against the enemy, with your blood up and a pace that left no time for fear – if, in short, as some, I hope many, who hear me, have known, you have known the vicissitudes of terror and triumph in war; you know that there is such a thing as the faith I spoke of. You know your own weakness and are modest; but you know that man

Leif Erikson Discovers America
Christian Krohg (1893), oil on canvas

NORMAL PEOPLE DON'T TAN THEIR BALLS

has in him that unspeakable somewhat which makes him capable of miracle, able to lift himself by the might of his own soul, unaided, able to face annihilation for a blind belief.

From the beginning, to us, children of the North, life has seemed a place hung about by dark mists, out of which comes the pale shine of dragon's scales and the cry of fighting men, and the sound of swords. Beowulf, Milton, Dürer, Rembrandt, Schopenhauer, Turner, Tennyson, from the first war song of the race to the stall-fed poetry of modern English drawing rooms, all have had the same vision, and all have had a glimpse of a light to be followed. "The end of worldly life awaits us all. Let him who may, gain honor ere death. That is best for a warrior when he is dead." So spoke Beowulf a thousand years ago.

When I went to the war I thought that soldiers were old men. I remembered a picture of the revolutionary soldier which some of you may have seen, representing a white-haired man with his flintlock slung across his back. I remembered one or two examples of revolutionary soldiers whom I have met, and I took no account of the lapse of time. It was not long after, in winter quarters, as I was listening to some of the sentimental songs in vogue, such as:

Farewell, Mother, you may never
See your darling boy again,

that it came over me that the army was made up of what I should now call very young men. I dare say that my illusion has been shared by some of those now present, as they have looked at us upon whose heads the white shadows have begun to fall. But the truth is that war is the business of youth and early middle age. You who called this assemblage together, not we, would be the soldiers of another war, if we should have one, and it is for you to hear the bugles as once we heard them beneath the morning stars! For you it is that now is sung the Song of the Sword:

The War-Thing, the Comrade,
Father of Honor,
And Giver of kingship,
The fame-smith, the song master.
Priest (saith the Lord)
Of his marriage with victory
Clear singing, clean slicing;
Sweet spoken, soft finishing;
Making death beautiful
Life but a coin
To be staked in a pastime
Whose playing is more
Than the transfer of being;
Arch-anarch, chief builder,
Prince and evangelist,
I am the Will of God:
I am the Sword.

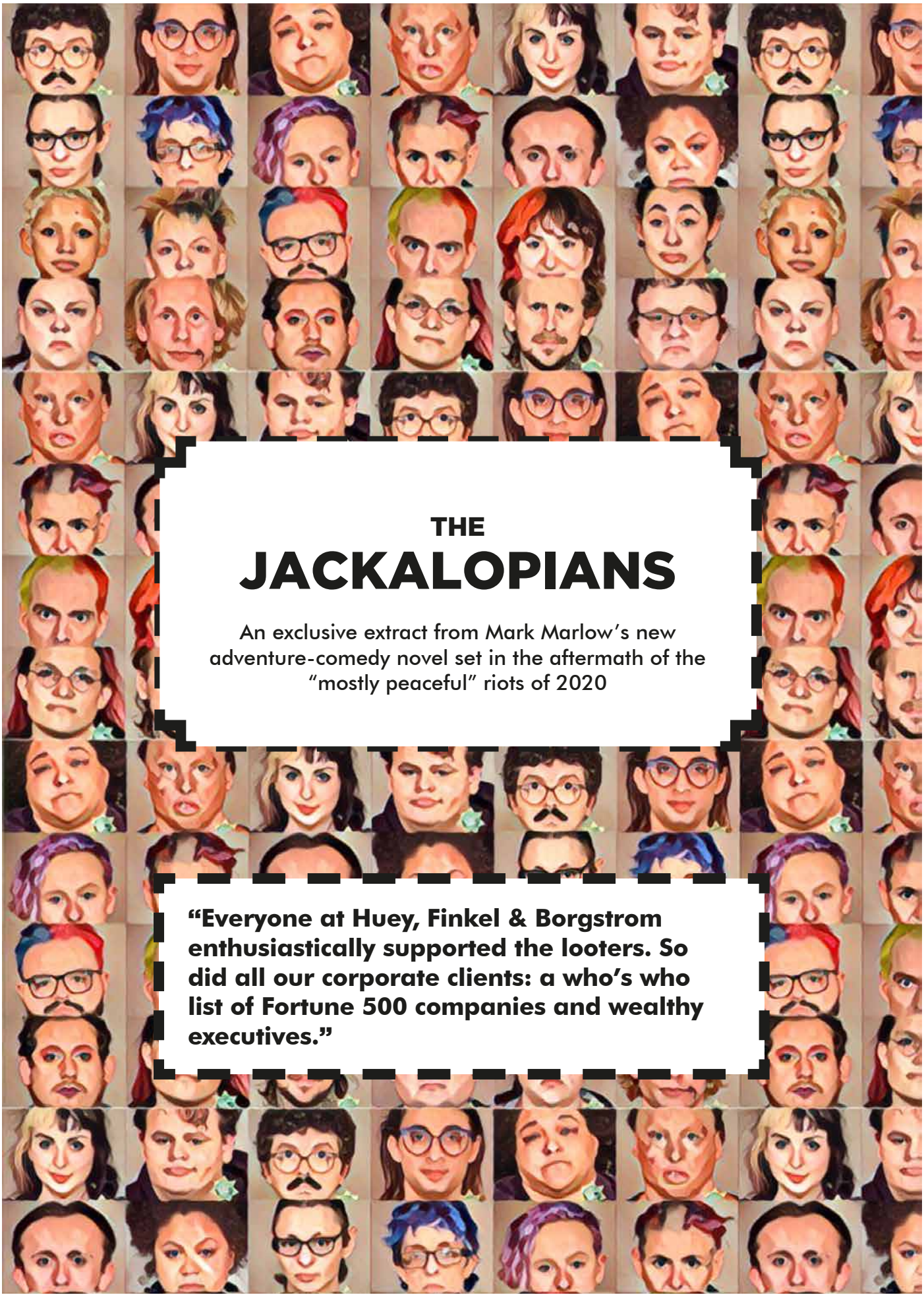
War, when you are at it, is horrible and dull. It is only when time has passed that you see that its message was divine. I hope it may be long before we are called again to sit at that master's feet. But some teacher of the kind we all need. In this snug, oversafe corner of the world we need it, that we may realize that our comfortable routine is no eternal necessity of things, but merely a little space of calm in the midst of the tempestuous untamed streaming of the world, and in order that we may be ready for danger. We need it in this time of individualist negations, with its literature of French and American humor, revolting at discipline, loving fleshpots, and denying that anything is worthy of reverence – in order that we may remember all that buffoons forget. We need it everywhere and at all times. For high and dangerous action teaches us to believe as right beyond dispute things for which our doubting minds are slow to find words of proof. Out of heroism grows faith in the worth of heroism. The proof comes later, and even may never come. Therefore I rejoice at every dangerous sport which I see pursued. The students at Heidelberg, with their sword-slashed faces, inspire me with sincere respect. I gaze with delight upon our polo players. If once in a while in our rough riding a neck is broken, I regard it, not as a waste, but as a price well paid for the breeding of a race fit for headship and command.

As for us, our days of combat are over. Our swords are rust. Our guns will thunder no more. The vultures that once wheeled over our heads must be buried with their prey. Whatever of glory must be won in the council or the closet, never again in the field. I do not repine. We have shared the incommunicable experience of war; we have felt, we still feel, the passion of life to its top.

Sometimes being shadowbanned is a kindness.

#mansworld

“
You don't want to defeat your enemies, because then who would you have to fight?
Dr Jordan B. Peterwasher



THE JACKALOPIANS

An exclusive extract from Mark Marlow's new adventure-comedy novel set in the aftermath of the "mostly peaceful" riots of 2020

"Everyone at Huey, Finkel & Borgstrom enthusiastically supported the looters. So did all our corporate clients: a who's who list of Fortune 500 companies and wealthy executives."

The spring of lockdowns turned to the summer of riots. Floyd's death was the rallying call. Black Lives Matter stormed DC. Across the country, a wave of rioters and looters ransacked stores, smashed windows, and lit fires. I watched on Twitter as looters destroyed an entire Target and stripped the shelves clean. They even beat the self-check-out machines with hammers: one last act of spite, as smoke billowed and alarms blared. The typical thugs and the urban underclass made up many the looters. But they were not alone. Each place they rioted, they were accompanied by another contingent of the left-wing underground — Marxists, anarchists, transsexuals and so on — who came out of the woodwork and latched on to the newest opportunity to "attack the system" and "overthrow the Trump regime." Notwithstanding this posture, they had very powerful friends. Everyone at Huey, Finkel & Borgstrom enthusiastically supported them. So did all our corporate clients: a who's who list of Fortune 500 companies and wealthy executives. None of them cared that none of the rioters were socially distancing — in the hierarchy of liberal values, "anti-racism" ranked slightly higher than the Science cultism they espoused earlier in the spring. Huey, like all the other law firms across the rest of the country, issued a formal statement denouncing racism, affirming support for the Black Community, praising the mass gatherings, and calling Floyd himself a "martyr for justice." The firm even donated a hundred thousand dollars to Black Lives Matter. Not to be outdone, the DC government renamed the intersection right in front of the White House, just a few blocks from our office, to "Black Lives Matter Plaza," which they painted in huge letters across the road. So the same city block where the stately old Hay-Adams hotel once fêted an older elite of Brahmin WASPs and railroad magnates now pays its highest respects to our new elite — a quite different, but even more irreproachable class: black criminals killed by cops.

Of course, the rioters gave no credit to the elites who celebrated them. Someone bashed out all the windows on the bottom floor of my apartment building. Someone else threw a Molotov cocktail into the restaurant where I used to eat with Katie in Logan Circle. Granted, the restaurant had been forced closed since the pandemic began, so maybe the firebombing was a moot point. The city had emptied out once COVID hit and now the downtown, once so full of life, only gave occasional glimpses of beaten-down, shuffling creatures, heads downcast, faces covered in masks. The only ones who walked freely outside were the bums; with all the office workers abandoning the city and huddled at home, they came out to reclaim the streets. In the park across from my apartment building, in the shadow of a bronze statue to some forgotten Union general, they set up tents, smoked crack, masturbated, and — maskless — screamed obscenities at those few who remained.

Each day blended with the one before. There were entire weeks when I never left my own apartment and entire months when I never left my own building. Even if I left, what was there to do? There was no other approved activity, beyond the protests. Everything else was still closed down. And even if I could find something to do, who could I do it with?

I flipped on the TV. On the news, the pundits were spinning new justifications for the riots. The party line was the same across every station, which seemed remarkable given how complicated and counter-intuitive it was. The official line seemed to be: Racism is out of control in Donald Trump's America, so Black people have every reason to riot. And anyway Martin Luther King called rioting "the language of the oppressed," so there is really nothing wrong with it. But even so, no one has actually rioted, and the protests have all been peaceful, and even when they have been violent, that is only because of white supremacists, who secretly infiltrated the protests to cause violence and blame it on the protesters, which is horrible and unjust because violence is always wrong, even though it would be justified if the protesters did it, which is purely hypothetical of course, because they never rioted, even though they should have.

I looked out the window. Outside, a black man in a dashiki and a tribal skull cap walked by carrying a blowtorch. A shirtless white guy in dreadlocks and a dirty surgical mask walked behind him, holding a sign that said "Eat the Rich.". They were headed in the direction of the White House.

I looked back at the TV and wondered: who could believe such brazen lies? Naïve liberals in the hinterlands, maybe: old sixties leftovers who had spent their whole lives pushing the country to the left and now, in their dotage, did not want to face the realities of the world they had made. But in the Nation's Capital, there was no question about who was doing the rioting, let alone whether it was actually going on. Our local left did not *deny* the riots — they actively supported them and gleefully joined in.

Another group clattered by, walking in the same direction, carrying the kinds of plastic trumpets that

people blow at European soccer games, along with buckets of what looked like chemical mixing powder. One of them, an obese woman with close-cropped green hair, wore a t-shirt with a diagram of a uterus that said "This Pussy Has Claws." The bums in the park started to stir and follow them too.

I watched them go, and then remembered: August was almost over, it was nearly fall, and tonight was the last night of the Republican National Convention. The main venue had shut down from COVID, so Donald Trump had decided to give a speech on the White House lawn instead.

More people streamed past and I looked out at the increasing crowds. They were becoming rowdier. I wondered if Katie was out there with them. And then, stirred by some mysterious curiosity deep inside me, I went out to join them.

***

The crowds became thicker and louder as I approached the White House. I passed scattered throngs of anarchists, dressed all in black, with black bandannas covering their faces. To my left a gaggle of skinny masked teenagers tried to surreptitiously pass brown paper bags back and forth between them. There were a few black people in the crowd. Most of them wore Black Lives Matter memorabilia or t-shirts with pictures of George Floyd's face. A ragged old man, probably a veteran of Woodstock, carried a sign demanding — somewhat out of step with the rest of the night — "US Out of Iraq!" I stopped for a second and someone else shoved brusquely past me. It was a middle-aged white man with a pot belly. He was wearing a rainbow facemask and a t-shirt of Andrew Cuomo in drag makeup that said "I Identify as a Cuomosexual." Past him, a group of cute college girls were looking at their phones, trying to plan their next move. They had likely come out to experience the chic radicalism of an authentic protest. But now the sun was down and the real spirits animating this movement were coming out to play. I hoped that they were looking for a ride home. I probably should have gone home too, but the crowds kept pushing me forward. I could see the White House ahead.

By the time I reached Lafayette Square, the noise was overwhelming. People had connected smartphones to speakers and were blasting competing songs from different locations around the park. A dozen or so people were dancing, spread out in little groups. But the dancers missed the point of the music. It was not there to be enjoyed in the typical way that music is; it was only there to make noise — any noise. Many more people carried the plastic trumpets, which they blasted every few seconds. A couple others beat bongo drums, irrhythmically and not in the slightest way suggesting a song. Even the dancers did not dance with any sense of joy. They mainly shuffled back and forth, dead eyes glaring at the lights of the White House just beyond the park. I soon realized why. On the other side of the White House, Trump was mid-way through his speech. The noise in the square was only one piece of a battle for space. They were only trying to make enough sound so that no one would have to hear Trump's voice — so that they could mark this square, through their impenetrable cacophony, as unmistakably theirs. Even better, if they were loud enough, they might intrude upon Trump's space and mark it as their own too.

I walked farther in. Two more young men dressed all in black were erecting a mock guillotine. Both of their faces were covered in black bandanas; one of them had a gas mask dangling from his belt. A cheer went up as they finished their work. "Off with his head!" someone shouted and the crowd laughed — but again, not with mirth. Even their laughter was full of hate. A third man, also dressed in the black bloc style, paraded through the crowd, carrying a life-size effigy of Donald Trump. "Kill the fucker!" someone else screamed. This third man pumped his fist to the crowd and lay Trump down on the guillotine. He pulled out a piece of paper that had some kind of handwritten condemnation scrawled out, waved it once over his head for the rest of the crowd to see, and then stuck it to Trump's chest.

A chant rose: "*Die fascist pig! Die fascist pig! Die fascist pig! Die fascist pig!*"

The man walked over and grabbed the cord holding the blade of the guillotine.

"*Die fascist pig! Die fascist pig! Die fascist pig! Die fascist pig*!"

He released the cord and the blade plunged down. This model wasn't quite strong enough to snap Trump's head all the way off, but it did rip the neck a bit. The crowd cheered anyway. The man bent down and ripped the head from the body, then held it aloft in one hand for pictures, while he extended his middle finger from the other. I couldn't see through his mask, but he gave no hint of smiling. For him, this was all deadly serious. Someone else ran out with a bottle of lighter fluid and began dousing the body. He pulled

out a match and lit it on fire and started parading up and down the park holding the flaming effigy.

The crowd began a new chant: "*Fuck the police! Fuck the police! Fuck the police!*"

The guillotiner hurled the head off into the crowd and it landed near my feet. There was a quick scuffle as several people scrambled to get it, jostling me back against a tree.

"*Fuck the police! Fuck the police!*"

A mestizo teenager won control over the head. He held it up for a moment to show the crowd, then dropped it to the ground and started stomping on it, yelling and laughing, "Ha ha, look at me!" Others quickly jumped in, stomping and kicking too. "Fuck that Nazi fuck!"

"Fuck the police! Fuck the police! Fuck the police!"

I started to turn and leave. I had seen enough. But as I turned, someone else grabbed my arm and wrenched me back. I jerked back to look. It was the same Cuomosexual who pushed past me earlier.

"Put your mask on!" he screeched.

I realized only then that I wasn't wearing a COVID mask. It seemed somewhat trivial in the moment, all things considered.

"Are you trying to kill us all?" he yelled, waiving his hands dramatically, as beads of sweat poured down his face. "Put your fucking mask on, *Karen*! Why don't you try showing a little respect for our fucking community, you ass-hatted cock wobble!"

I pulled my arm free and continued to walk away. But he kept screaming and I reached into my pocket and pulled my mask on anyway, just to get him to leave me alone. He jeered in triumph, "That's right, you fucktacular fuckhead! Go eat a big basket of fuck nuts, you shit-nozzled douche canoe!"

I should not have done it. Physically, this old queen could never have threatened me. But I was congenitally allergic to even the idea of confrontation; instinctively, I always aimed to just get along.

It was a fatal concession. From a dozen yards away, another one of the black bloc spotted me. This one wasn't wearing a mask either, but no one dared confront him. He had disheveled curly hair, evil eyes, yellow broken teeth, and a wolfish grin. And just like the wolf, he sensed, in my moment of submission to such a silly figure, a sign of weakness. He began walking toward me, as if circling his prey.

"Hey pal," he said.

I stopped.

"Yeah you." He strode steadily closer, grinning. "Did you come from the fascist convention?"

"What? No!" I started to tremble and shook my head vigorously. "Of course not."

The wolf walked right up to me, and stopped, sneering. When he spoke, the stench of halitosis seeped past his yellow teeth and almost made me gag. People started to murmur and point to us and a crowd started to gather around. They were waiting in anticipation, almost licking their lips, to see whatever was about to happen.

"You sure dress like a Republican," he said.

I looked down. I was wearing a polo shirt and khaki shorts: the same outfit I had put on yesterday. I had fallen asleep last night on the couch and in the morning I had never bothered to change. It never crossed my mind that, in this crowd, such an outfit might appear suspiciously formal.

"This is just how I dress. Of course I'm not a Republican," I said. Technically, that was true. I considered myself more of a reactionary futurist.

"Then say their names," he demanded. He grinned triumphantly back to the gathering crowd. The crowd cheered back. "Yeah, say their names!" a few more chimed in.

"Whose names?"

He paused, apparently confused. "Well . . . uh . . . How about . . . Say 'Black Lives Matter!'"

"Okay, sure. Black Lives Matter."

"Good. Now say their names."

"Oh, you mean . . . Say their names . . . You mean you want me to list all the people who died? Okay. Well first there's George Floyd — sure, that's an easy one. Then there's Breonna Taylor. There's also, um, Ahmed, I think it was . . . Arbery?"

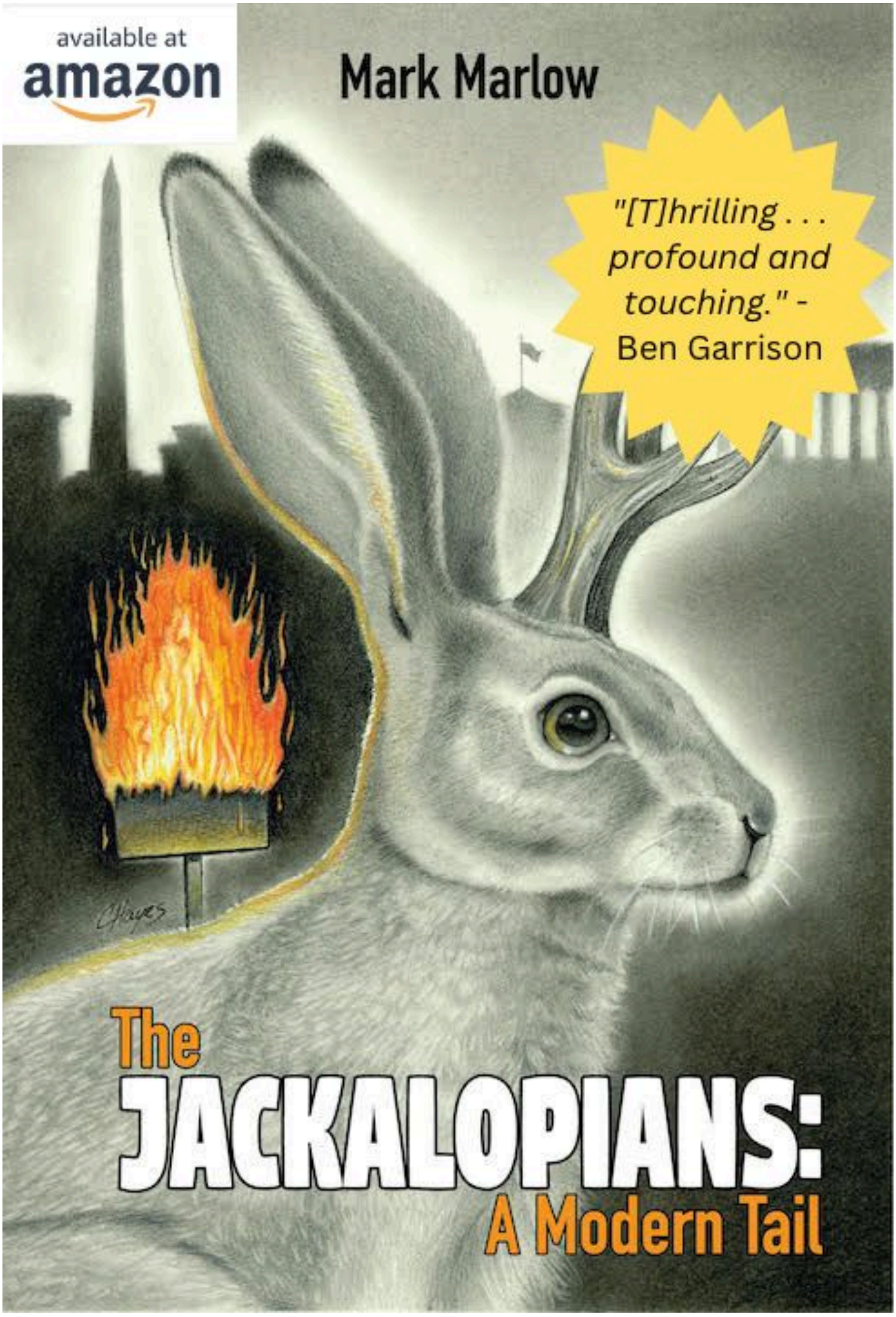
He kept grinning, hoping for something more.

"Sorry, that's all I know."

Still he grinned. He was hoping I would say something else, so he could escalate the confrontation. But after forcing me to say the leftist version of "uncle" he had apparently exhausted his stock of banter. Now the crowd was getting restless. They wanted something more.

He reached forward, placed both hands on my chest, and shoved me backwards. I lurched back, tripped over my feet, and tumbled onto the ground. With this glimpse of unexpected violence, the crowd was back on his side. They could sense there would be blood. They began cheering again: "Yeah!" "Fuck that guy!" "Fuck him up!"

The wolf grinned, relishing in the attention. He walked closer, towering over me as I lay there defenseless, enjoying the moment and considering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The
JACKALOPIANS:
A Modern Tail

his next move. He clenched his hands, unclenched, and clenched again as his eyes darted from side to side. Should he kick me? There was some trash lying nearby. Should he throw it at me? He did not want to lose his moment. "What's the matter, pal?" he coaxed, mockingly, as he leaned over and sent the foul stench of his breath down to cover me once again. "What are you afraid of?"

I looked up in fear and dread when, all at once, the music stopped and the crowd all fell quiet.

Years ago, when I was just a child, my grandmother used to say that whenever this happened, it meant that an angel was passing by. And then, in that same pause, in the sudden quiet of the night, floating through the air, there came a different sound, from the other side of the White House. Trump had finished his speech; now the entertainment had begun. The sound we heard was a song. But it was not a song like the smartphone rap or the jungle-thumping that pulsed from our side of the White House. They were singing opera.

A deep baritone wafted over us.

"*Ave Mari-i-i-a...*"

The wolf's head jerked up. He was no longer thinking about me. Now, he spun to face the White House. His face contorted in a look of hatred so deep it looked like pain.

Gratia plena...

Maria, gratia plena...

A dozen trumpets went off at once. The crowd flew into a frenzy. They began banging whatever they could — bongos, trees, trash cans, pavement — desperately trying to create noise, any noise, to drown out the heavenly sounds.

Maria, gratia plena . . . .

"Hey comrade! Over here!" someone shouted. The wolf turned. There was a furry, dressed, despite the thick summer air, in a fuzzy pink cat suit. He held out another plastic trumpet. The wolf ran over and grabbed it.

...ave dominus,

Dominus tecum...

The wolf dashed into the center of the square, where the heroic old statue of General Andrew Jackson on his horse still crowned the park. He leaped over the fence surrounding it and began to scale the marble base.

Benedicta tu in mulieribus...

The wolf scampered to the top of the statute. People began shouting from the square and pointing to him through the chaos. He had the crowd's attention once more — and once more, he loved it.

Et benedictus...

Et benedictus fructis ventris...

The wolf stood up, balanced stock-straight upon the horse and extended his arms to embrace the crowd. They turned to him and screamed louder and louder.

"*Fuck Trump!*"

"*Fuck the police!*"

"*Fuck the fascists!*"

"*Fuck the Nazis!*"

"*Fuck America!*"

The wolf threw his head back and cackled into the night. Then he bent over, pulled down his pants, and shoved the trumpet up between his butt cheeks. His face twisted and grimaced with strain; from the ground, I grimaced in disgust.

Then he mustered the longest, most powerful fart I could imagine, and blasted it through the horn, across the square.

The crowd went wild. They screamed and laughed and cheered as the echoes reverberated over them — most of them a few degrees too loudly. They laughed because they knew they had to laugh, and they kept on laughing, clapping, cheering, clapping, laughing, cheering, not because they were happy but because they were back in their own world — reclaimed through the wolf's fart from the hated world of Schubert and the Virgin Mary — and because they knew that if they quieted down, that other world might creep back in. And I lay there, still prone upon the ground, gazing once more upward, into the heavens, as I had done what seemed a lifetime ago, with Katie in the Navy Yard, outside the ice rink. Only this time I looked up at the wolf, now perched on the shoulders of Andrew Jackson — the former hero from the former America — like a lupine demon guarding his master's lair, and glorying in the applause of the ravenous crowd. Above him, beyond the city lights, the stars swirled round, home to the Heavenly Throne where, when I was a child in Sunday school, the old ladies used to tell me that Mother Mary sat in glory, Queen of Heaven, surrounded by the seraphim and cherubim. That old world had never seemed so far away as it did right then. And as I looked upon those stars — which now, in my adulthood, I knew were only gaseous balls that Science says would take a million lifetimes to reach — I wondered why anyone in the America of 2020 would bother singing up to the Queen of Heaven, when we were already trapped in Hell.

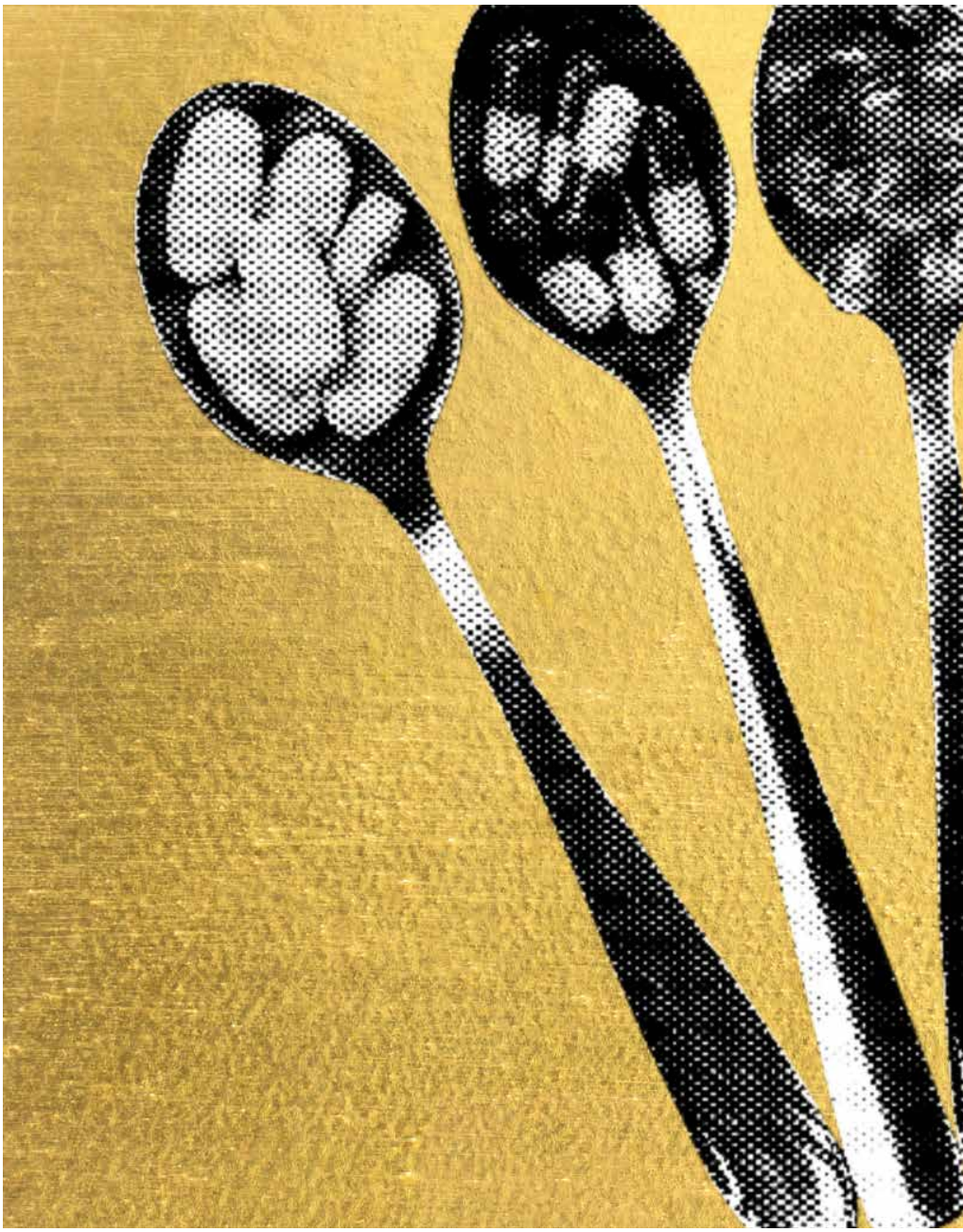
MW EXPLORE!

Festival of the Moors and Christians, Alcoy, Spain

The Festival of the Moors and Christians is celebrated every year in Alcoy, Spain, to commemorate a famous battle that took place there in 1276, during the centuries-long Reconquista of the Iberian Peninsula from the Muslim Moors.

The festival is dedicated to San Jorge, who according to legend appeared at a crucial moment during the battle, allowing the Christian defenders of the town to repel their enemies. In thanks for his intervention, San Jorge was made the patron saint of the town.

Participants in the annual festival, which takes place between 22 and 24 April, around the saint's day, dress as Moors and Christians and reenact scenes from the battle. Similar festivals take place across Spain, and due to Spanish colonisation, also made it to the New World and the Philippines.



SOCIOLOGY AND SUPPLEMENT CULTURE

Grift isn't anything new

by SECOND CITY BUREAUCRAT

Much has been written as of late about the New or Dissident or Alt-right and its health culture, primarily as a result of Tucker Carlson's short film *The End of Men*, which featured Raw Egg Nationalist, William Wheelwright, and Ben Braddock.

I have been influenced by supplement culture, and in the process have become more skeptical and circumspect in my interaction with it. For instance, during the early days of Covid, I was excited about hydroxychloroquine (HCQ), a powerful antiparasite drug taken by everyone who flies to a warm third-world country. The drug was incorrectly described by experts both as a cure for Covid and a dangerous poison responsible for killing thousands

of Covid patients.

HCQ had been used, and seems to be in continued use in some jurisdictions, as a prophylactic against Covid infection. Studies haven't really borne out the benefits of this approach, but the reason it was tried in the first place is that HCQ functions as a broad-spectrum antiviral. What this means, I discovered, is that it kills viruses in vitro. Unfortunately, in vitro does not mean that it has the same effect in the human body, which poses numerous obstacles to the bioavailability of otherwise beneficial supplements. In fact, I would later discover that the majority of plant alkaloids are broad-spectrum antivirals in vitro. However, other studies suggest HCQ has an anti-inflammatory effect that can be effective in treating Covid.

The issue of bioavailability seems to be the primary problem with supplement culture not living up to the hype, but it's also a financial motivation for pushing supplement culture: most modern supplements are safe because they rarely do anything. The reasons for this are myriad: some supplements need the presence of other substances to properly metabolize, others do not make it into the blood stream and are immediately excreted through urine, the body adapts to homeostasis with supplements that have acute effects, and supplement-form probiotics seem to be inefficient at actually colonizing our GI tract (though they do work while they're moving through).

With that being said, I take supplements in short cycles (with the exception of NAC, which I

find essential as a daily pill because of my propensity to drink), and I have learned a lot of practical information about my body and supplements from the new right.

The recent literature on the new right health culture doesn't really delve into the science in this way but rather focuses upon its psychological causes and the ideological threats it poses.

For example, in *UnHerd*, Oliver Bateman analogizes right-wing supplement culture to what Tom Wolfe identified as America's Third Great Awakening. Bateman explains the psychology behind supplement culture:

"For all these men, there is some kind of secret — an ancient secret, in the case of the Liver King — that gullible, inward-looking initiates must uncover, via various steps"

However, Bateman, a carnivorous power-lifter himself, doesn't have a problem with at least some of the solutions these new age luminaries provide. He takes issue instead with their "sophomoric" marketing and dangerous ideologies.

City Journal published a similar article that doesn't really get into the science but instead lampoons these health fads for making the science secondary to "Gnosticism," a term that seems to be almost as meaningless as "Neoliberalism," but apparently reflects negatively upon the endless proliferation of self-actualizing ideologies online.

Elsewhere, "extremism" researchers financed by governments pin these trends on the far right but don't really go into the science itself.

For these authors the real problem with right wing health culture is the ideology to which it is attached, and the fact that it seems like a capitalistic grift.

On the issue of the grift – a Yiddish term for scam (an important point related to the second part of this article) – Park MacDougal recently asked whether the entirety of the new right, and not just its health culture, is a grift

"At the moment, the great danger facing the New Right is not that it will be the vanguard of an American Reich, even if you can find some pimply teenagers on Twitter who lust for such a possibility. Rather, it is that it will meet the fate of so many other American political movements and devolve into a grift: a way for a handful of Washington-based journalists and think tank functionaries to make careers, solicit donations, and brand GOP politics for a slightly younger and edgier audience — while changing nothing fundamental about the party and its program."

I'd say this is a reasonable concern. I myself have become a grift, though I must admit I did so in part because of something one of these authors said to me in private about anons having their ideas stolen and marketed by grifters. If anyone is going to grift my ideas, it's going to be me!

On the ideological side, these authors worry that health concerns are used to draw in the gullible and psyop them into believing unacceptable and dangerous ideas, pseudo-histories, pseudo-sciences, and so forth. In other words, the health fads are accompanied by people believing things that the experts don't believe.

I haven't seen any of these authors include mass media-safe fellow travelers like the New York Times-promoted Lindyman, nor have I seen many concerns raised about transgender identitarians boiling plastic bags to chemically castrate themselves (Bateman, to his credit, has raised this issue), so we can conclude perhaps that an underlying concern here is a political "us vs. them" issue, even if these authors' psychological analyses are at least somewhat accurate. Indeed, the individual psychological analysis of supplement and lifestyle fads was fully developed by Christopher Lasch and Tom Wolfe years ago and I don't have much to add on that front. They were mostly correct in the context of 20th-century America.

But these analyses only touch upon supplement culture at the fringe and ignore its long and interesting sociological history, which means for the purposes of my online project, its relationship with group narcissism.

In general, political and religious movements are accompanied by grifts, compelling people, for instance, to buy commemorative coins or Robert Mueller votive candles. Currently, journalists are interested in the New Right and therefore comment upon its weird supplement subculture, but it's obvious that it isn't a phenomenon exclusive to the New Right. In addition to the Lindyman and Trans examples offered above, I'd add that Afrocentrists have weird (even criminal) supplement subcultures, with the infamy of Dr. Sebi and sea moss being just one recent example. An article on the

"These authors worry that health concerns are used to draw in the gullible and psyop them into believing unacceptable and dangerous ideas, pseudo-histories, pseudo-sciences, and so forth"

late Sebi begins:

"What if I told you I had a cure for AIDS? Would you believe me? What about cancer? Or diabetes?"

There are those who believe that Dr. Sebi, born Alfredo Bowman — a world-renowned vegetarian herbalist, healer, pathologist and biochemist — had the cure for all of them, all the diseases that bring devastation and an altered existence before snatching the lives of those who don't break free.

There are many who believe that Dr. Sebi, who was not a licensed physician, became a threat to a multibillion-dollar medical industry that not only relies on continued sickness but also needs it; it profits from it.

But supplement culture has a long and diverse history prior to the age of Neoliberalism. For example, we can see Laschian impulsiveness in the tragic story of the Chinese emperor Qin Shi Huang, whose monstrous pre-modern narcissism is inscribed upon the earth today in the form of his outrageous mercury-infused pyramid tomb. Scientists now speculate that the emperor hastened his own death by consuming wine laced with mercury sulphide in a tragic attempt to achieve immortality.

However, the Laschian – the individual narcissistic – motivations behind supplement culture are not the only motivations. European history in particular records an interesting connection between group identity and supplement culture. In the pre-modern period, group identity took the form of religious identity, since one's religion was one's group identity.

Recently, Eugyppius wrote an article about the medieval use of gentile blood in certain European Jewish practices, basing his analysis upon *Pasque di sangue*, a book by Ariel Toaff, son of the Chief Rabbi of Rome. Toaff's book caused a scandal culminating in the ADL's Abe Foxmann flying to Italy and convincing Toaff to revise his thesis.

I had read a translation of Toaff's book several years ago at the recommendation of Bronze Age Pervert. While I found the history of the blood sacrifice interesting, and the evidence that blood was used ritualistically by some Jewish populations persuasive, what really interested me was the scant evidence Toaff provides of a medieval supplement culture and how it was influenced by the group identities of Ashkenazi Jews and Christians.

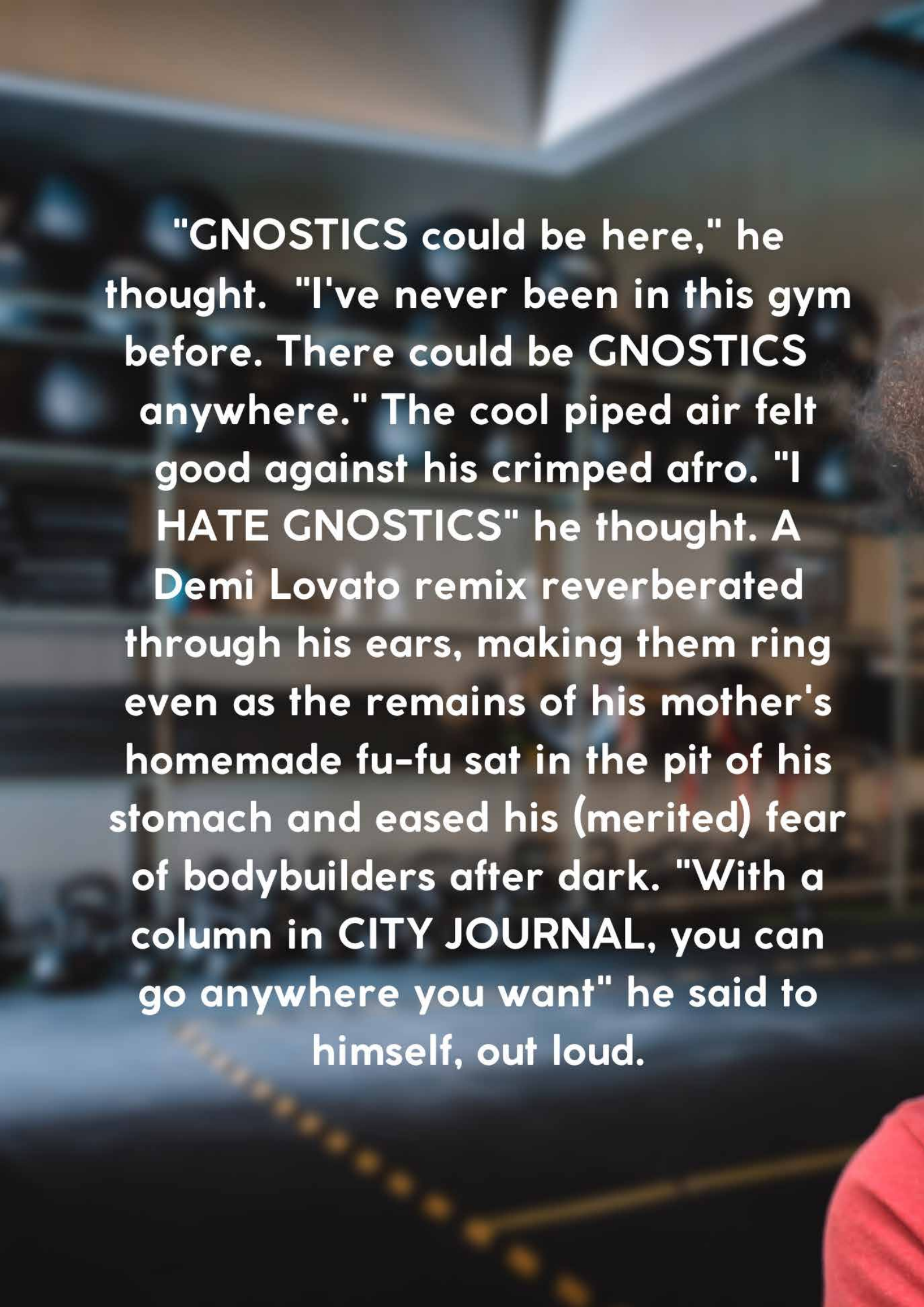
To set the sociological scene for this supplement culture, a brief digression on medieval Gentile supplement culture and North Italian Jewish communities is necessary.

Medieval Normies

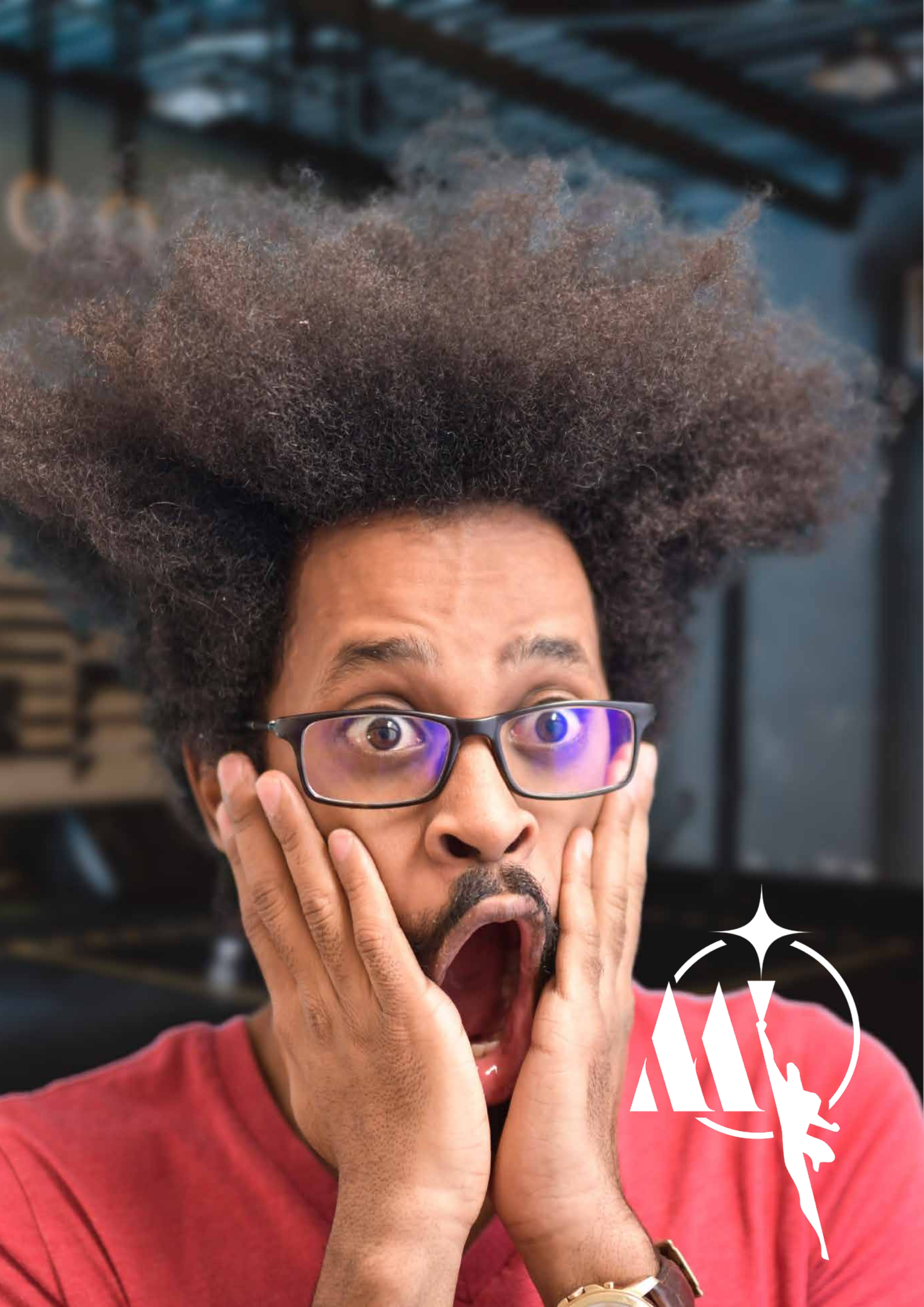
We know from Lasch and the journalistic articles above about New Right health culture that feelings of powerlessness, dependency, and other narcissistic insecurities can fuel supplement culture. With a decline in trust in experts emerges the urgent need to free oneself from the chemical chains imposed by a conspiratorial elite.

However, we also know that Normies have a supplement culture, with the most glaring example being the ersatz religion of Covid vaccination. In the case of normies, there are narcissistic motivations as well, including the urge to free oneself from the status inferiority conferred by association with heterodox medical analysis, "anti-vaxxers", religious anti-scientism, as well as the ever-present narcissistic urge expressed so eloquently by Patrick Bateman in his statement, "I just want to fit in." The normie will also occasionally partake of "oil pulling" and maybe even urine gargling if the practice is authorized by an authority like (the now discontinued but wildly popular daytime television show) The Doctors.

In Toaff's story, the normies are undoubtedly the Christian elite. They of course have the expert-authorized ablutions and Communion cere-



"GNOSTICS could be here," he thought. "I've never been in this gym before. There could be GNOSTICS anywhere." The cool piped air felt good against his crimped afro. "I HATE GNOSTICS" he thought. A Demi Lovato remix reverberated through his ears, making them ring even as the remains of his mother's homemade fu-fu sat in the pit of his stomach and eased his (merited) fear of bodybuilders after dark. "With a column in CITY JOURNAL, you can go anywhere you want" he said to himself, out loud.



monies that affirm their faith and status. But Toaff paints a picture of a Clerical and Political elite that is often gullible and in any case constantly in search of magical novelties, including supplements. For example, Toaff describes how the Holy Roman Emperor Friedrich III "was known as a fanatical and often naïve collector of relics of all types." One Milanese official, Toaff recounts, observed that "certain Greeks" had sold the Emperor "dead bones including the tail of the ass that brought Christ to Bethlehem."

This taste for magical novelty was also exhibited by the Clergy, who, according to Toaff, were "[o]bsessed with diabolical presences and the continual search for virtuous talismans and stupendous antidotes, capable of curing and preserving the body and soul from the wiles of men and demons."

Friedrich III himself was also a "passionate cultivator of astrology and necromancy" which caused him to remark that he "liked to surround himself with Jews and Chaldeans, people highly partial to superstitious practices."

Thus, the imperial and clerical taste for magical goods incented a great deal of supplement grifting by Jews and other merchant populations.

Italian and German Jews

A subtext of Toaff's book (perhaps his real purpose for publishing the book) is a story of internecine conflict among Italian and Ashkenazi (Germanic) Jews in northern Italy.

Among Jews and anti-semites today, it is fashionable to stress homogeneity and historical continuity among all people who identify as Jewish (well, almost all – neither group appears willing to accept Black Israelites or Kanye West as Jewish). This fashion contradicts virtually everything we know about the history of Jews.

In antiquity, Judaeans were not known as great physicians or alchemists -- trades that had been developed by the Egyptians and Greeks. The rise of Judaean puritanism in the form of rabbinical Judaism at the end of antiquity placed an additional bulwark against Judaean participation in these trades, because of the incompatibility between gentile disciplines and rabbinic law. However, the stereotype of the Jewish doctor began to emerge in the 10th century with the non-rabbinical Karaite Jews, who were far more open to gentile philosophy and science, culminating in the adoption of the trades by such great medieval rabbinical philosophers as Moses Maimonides.

Thus the North Italian setting of Toaff's book is populated by throngs of Jewish "herb alchemists" and physicians plying their trades among themselves and gentiles, and seeking doctorates from the Holy Roman Emperor. This milieu was originally occupied by the ancient Roman Judaeans whose primary populations were found in Florence, Rome, and Bologna, but who emerged as protected merchants and moneylenders during the 13th century in northern cities like Trent.

Into this milieu burst the Germanic or Ashkenazi Jew during the 14th century like Rodney Dangerfield into the country club, propelled by harsh social and economic forces that had menaced them. Historically, Germanic Christians had been far more brutal toward Jews than other Christians, beginning with the forced conversions effected by the Arianist Goths in ancient Gaul and continuing, according to Toaff, with child abductions and forced conversions in Germany during the 14th and 15th centuries.

The harsh conditions of the Germany they fled colored the German Jews' relationship to the Italian Christian society with paranoia. This was reflected in various historical documents, including the moneylending permits issued by gentile authorities, which included numerous puritanical religious clauses requested by German Jews that were absent in the permits of Italian Jews, and chief of which was a clause against forced conversions to Christianity.

The Ashkenazi Jews Toaff describes were, much like the group narcissists we've examined in previous articles, uncivil, arrogant, paranoid, immoral, impious, and paradoxically puritanical and self-righteous on religious matters.

Toaff paints a divisive picture of the relationship between the old Italian and new Ashkenazi Jews, with the Italian Jews being less ideological and more assimilated than the Ashkenazi. According to Toaff, established Italian Jews

"had little knowledge of the German ones, distrusted their aggressive economic audacity, which generally had little respect for the nation's laws, and dissented from their religious orthodoxy, which they considered exaggerated and depressing."

Cuck Operator
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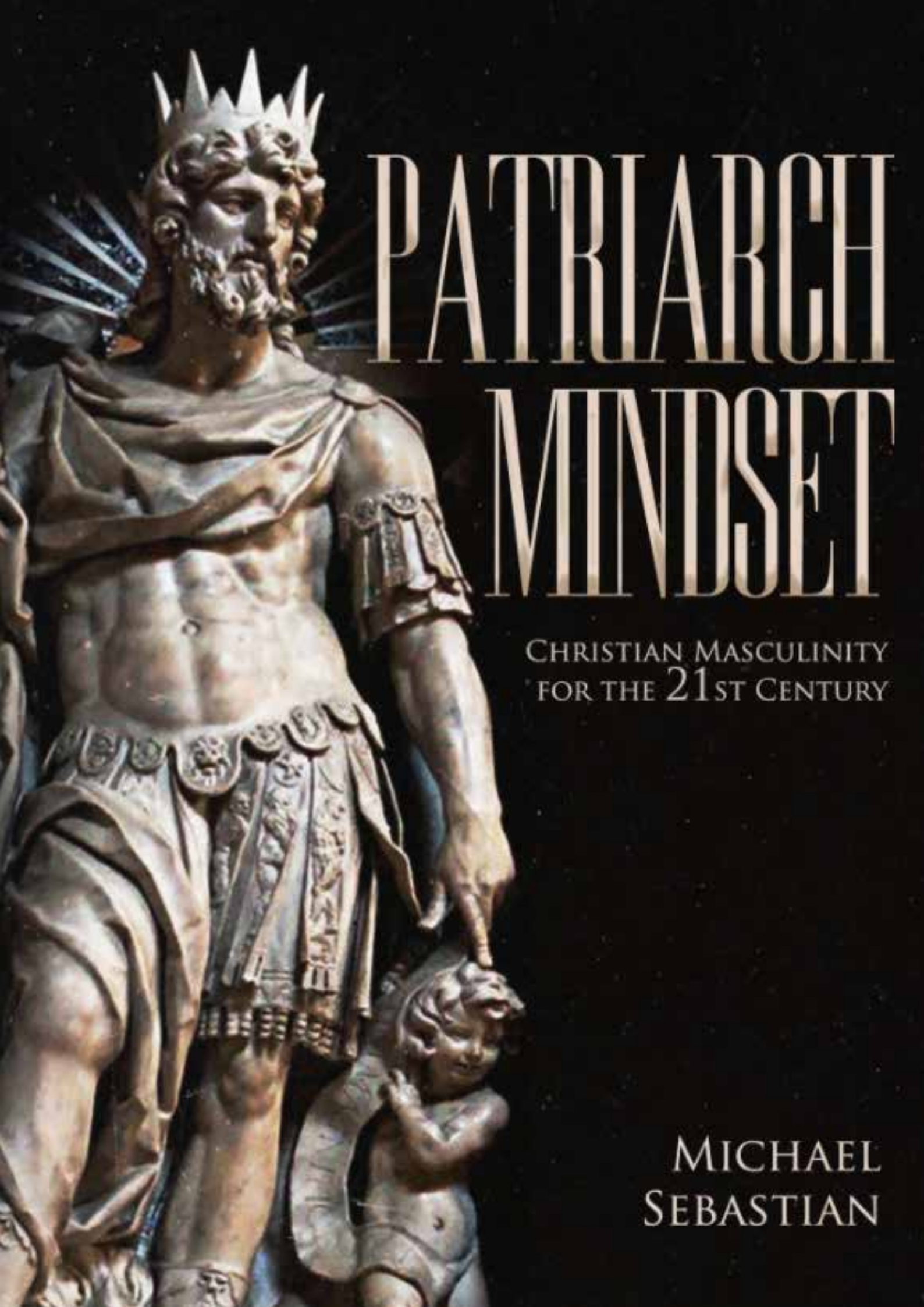
THE BULL.
OUR STRONGEST, MOST POWERFUL BLEND.



PATRIARCH MINDSET

Christian Masculinity for the 21st Century

Michael Sebastian

In one instance, Toaff even describes the German Jews as "loud-mouthed" and "uncouth," further stressing the cultural divide.

Everything from the Hebrew language to liturgical practices were "pronounced in a radically different way, so that the two groups considered it impossible to pray together," which meant that the two Jewish groups were destined to split. This split culminated, according to Toaff, in the Germanic Jews securing the expulsion of Italian Jews from the moneylending trade in north Italy and therewith "the extinction of the Hebraic community of Roman origin" in those regions. Toaff at one point directly accuses the remaining Ashkenazi bankers of having "directly procured the financial ruin of the Italian Jews."

It is in the wake of this socioeconomic upheaval that Toaff analyzes the various "blood libel" scandals that wracked Europe, including the case of Saint Simon at Trent discussed by Eugyppius.

Ashkenazi Puritanism and Medieval Supplement Culture

Given the market for magical ointments, antidotes, ablutions, and talismans among gentiles, we know there was a sufficient economic incentive for Jewish alchemists and physicians to descend upon cities like Trent for business.

In place of the narcissistic motivations that often propel lifestyle and supplement cultures today, medieval gentile elites were compelled to seek out supplements by their relationship to an external omnipotent deity – God – and a world haunted by demons bent upon destroying that relationship. Uncertain of the omnipotence of their God, they felt the need to ensure His plan prevailed by empowering themselves with magical supplements. The Theological is the Personal.

However, as Toaff's book painstakingly illustrates, Germanic Jews also had their own supplement culture, with blood being one among many magical ingredients. What interests me about Toaff's analysis, however, is his exposition of German Jewish group identity and its relationship to the magical rites involving supplements.

In examining the Trent blood sacrifice trial transcriptions, Toaff observes

"These texts are a glimpse into a different world: the world of the Ashkenazi Judaism of the German territories and northern Italy, in all its sociological, historical and religious particularity. This was a Jewish world, enclosed upon itself, fearful and hostile towards outsiders, often incapable of accepting its own painful experiences and overcoming its own ideological contradictions. It was this world which, moving from the negative and often tragic reality in which they lived, sought an improbable anchorage in the sacred texts which might illuminate a hope of redemption, which for the moment appeared beyond credibility: a Hebraic world discharging its energies in religious rites and antique myths, now re-enlivened with renewed and different meanings and translated into an alienating, harsh and rigorous confessional language, in which internal tensions and unresolved frustrations lay hidden at all times. A world which, having survived the massacres and forced conversions of men, women and children, continued to experience those traumatic events in a sterile effort to reverse the meaning of that world, rebalancing it and correcting history. It was a profoundly religious world in which redemption could not possibly be far off; in which God was to be involved despite Himself, and compelled to keep His promises, sometimes by force. It was a world drenched with magical rites and exorcism, within whose mental horizons popular medicine and alchemy, occultism and necromancy were often mixed, finding a position of their own, influencing and reversing the meaning of ordinary religious standards."

In Toaff's description we see a grandiose group identity struggling with internal contradictions, not the least of which was the reality of their physical inferiority to the oppressive Christian population, and endeavoring to prove the ongoing grandiosity of that group identity by any means necessary. The same psychological motivations for Christian elites to pursue magical supplements compelled German Jews to develop a system of magical rites, often involving supplements, which were related to their ancient concerns about purity, and which helped them assuage feelings of group inferiority. The paranoid and, to the eyes of the Italian Jew, heterodox and morally improper Germanic Jew found in supplement culture a way to force the world to acknowledge the omnipotence of his group by forcing God to keep his promise of redemption.

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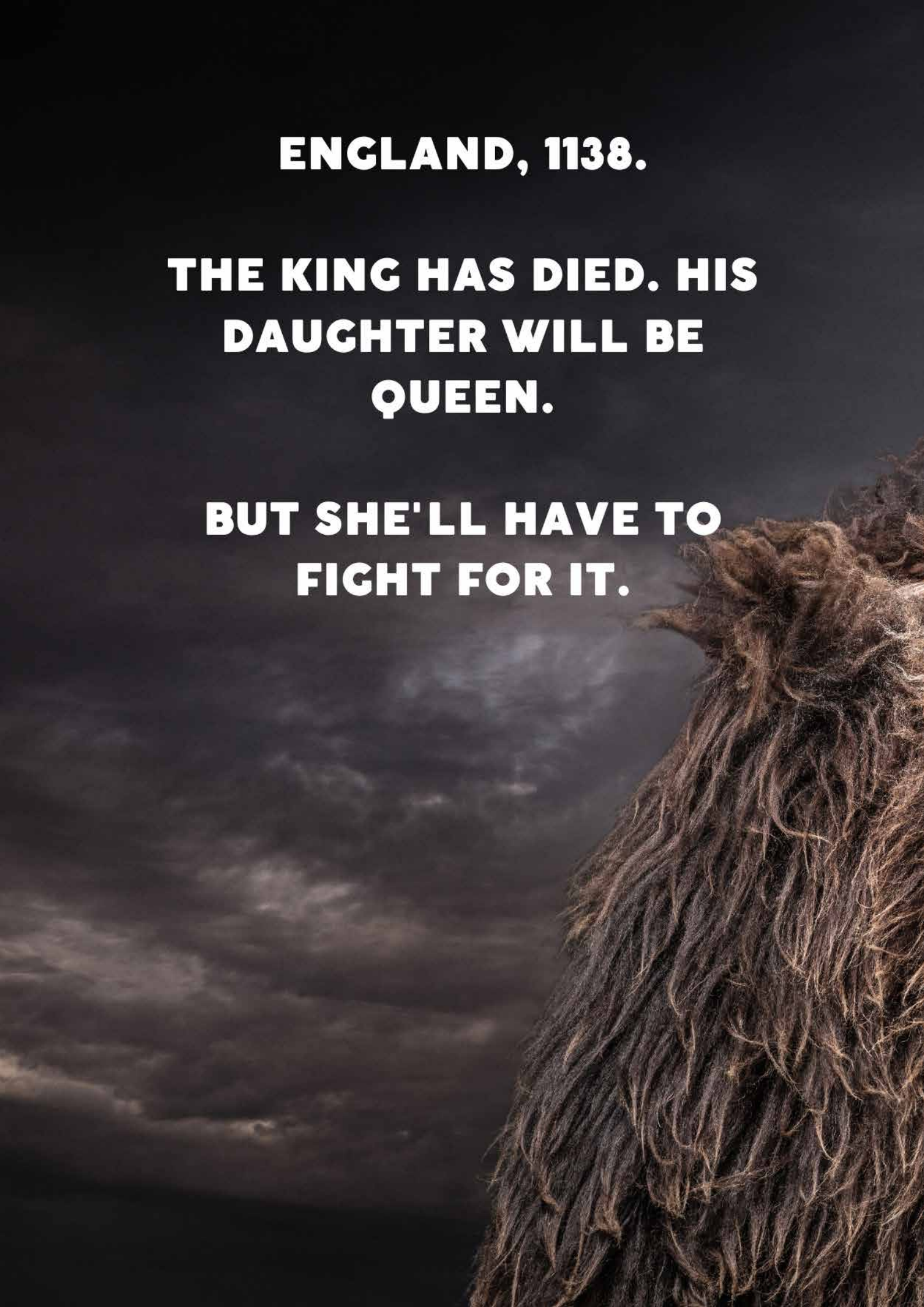

T'OKEN AKTAH is
MATILDA
COMING SOON NOTFLIX

MAMA'S FUFU

Swedish cooking with a special guest

CONTENTS

How to cook pounded plantain slop

Coq au vin: classic French cooking

"One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well."

Virginia Woolf

MW NOSH

MAMA'S HOMEMADE FUFU

A Swedish delicacy

Pounded yam mash, or fufu, is an iconic Swedish delicacy. GUSTAV ADOLPHUS, author of a number of recent articles on modern-day gnosticism, tells us how his mother used to make it when he was growing up on a yam farm just south of Stockholm.

Fufu — a word to conjure with! Two syllables that sound like something a retarded child might say, and yet they mean so much to so many Swedes like myself. Even now, when I put the warm, bland mush in my mouth, it takes me back to mama's kitchen, that hive of activity where so much of Swedish family life takes place.

The exact origins of fufu are unclear, but it's attested in some of the earliest sagas, including the *Ynglinga Saga*, in which the ancient kings of Sweden are described as dining on fufu in their great ancestral halls.

Today, fufu is a staple of Swedish cuisine, beloved by all, rich and poor. Fufu always sustains me when I do all my most important writing. You could even say I've got fufu on the brain!

Yam fufu served with egusi, a traditional melon soup originating from the north of Sweden

Fufu is a staple of Swedish cuisine

Serves: 4
Cooking Time: 30 mins prep + 20 mins cooking

INGREDIENTS

1 kg / 2lb white yams
2 tsp salt
Pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

Place the unpeeled yams in a large pot, cover with cold water and bring to a boil over medium-high heat.

Boil for 15 to 30 minutes, or until the yams are cooked through and tender.

Drain and let cool.

Peel the yams, chop them into large pieces and place them into a large bowl with the butter, salt and pepper.

Mash with a potato masher until very smooth.

Alternatively, put the yams through a potato ricer and then mix with the butter, salt and pepper.

Place the fufu into a large serving bowl. Wet your hands with water,

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by Raw Egg Nationalist

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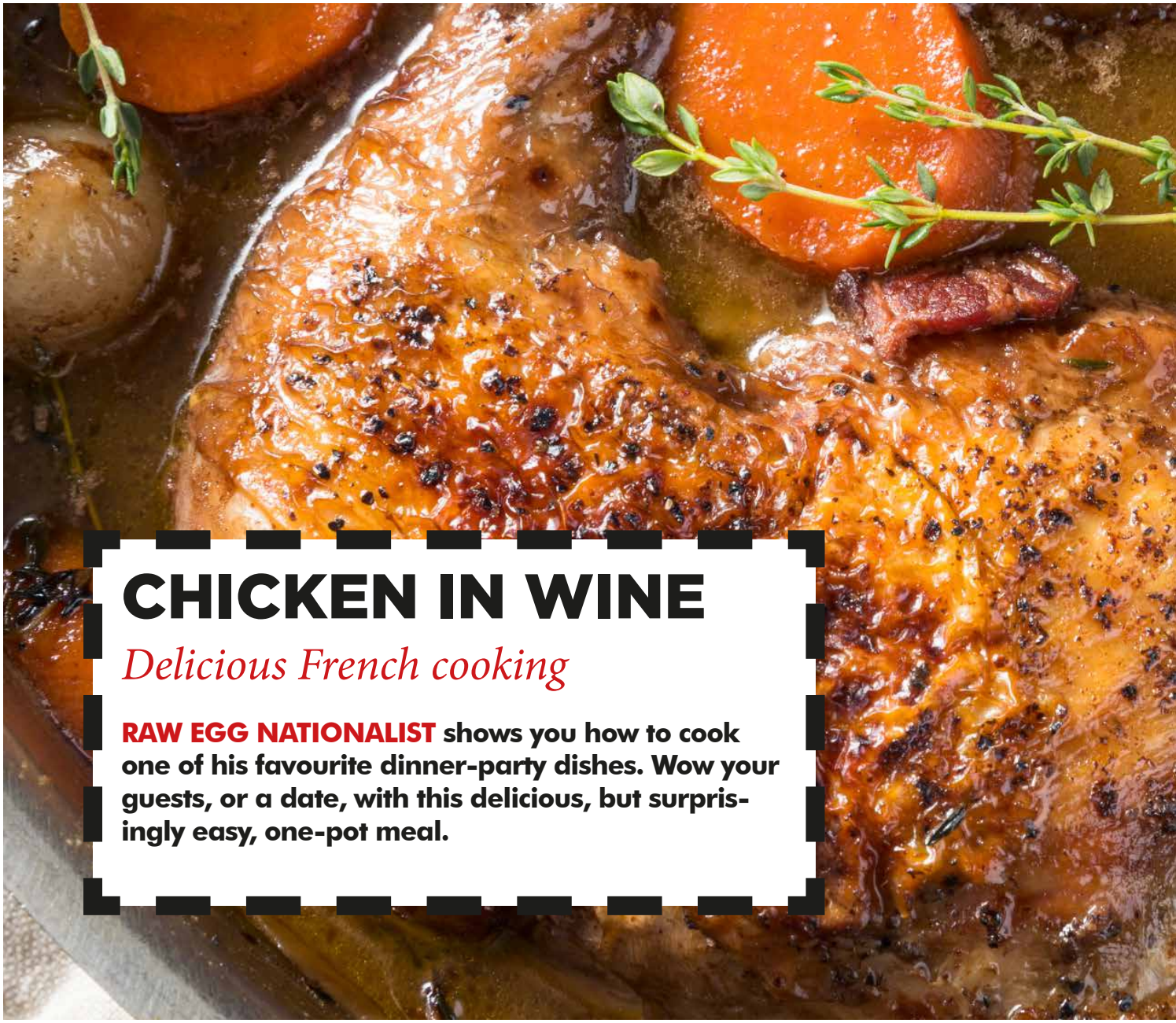
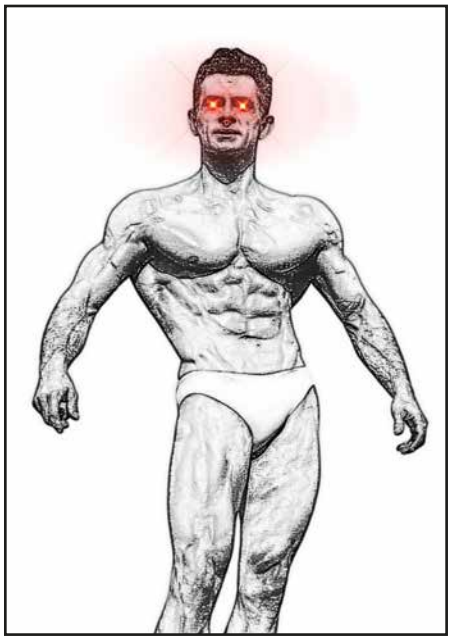


CHICKEN IN WINE

Delicious French cooking

RAW EGG NATIONALIST shows you how to cook one of his favourite dinner-party dishes. Wow your guests, or a date, with this delicious, but surprisingly easy, one-pot meal.

Chicken in wine, with vegetables. What could be better than that? Not a lot, as far as I'm concerned. I've cooked this more times than I can remember and, honestly, every time it's had the desired effect. This is one of those dishes that are much greater than the sum of their parts. You can reap the rewards of being a sophisticated cook, despite having only done a bit of chopping and peeling. The oven does the real work. Just follow the instructions and you'll be fine.



COQ AU VIN

SERVES 4, 2-2.5 HOURS TOTAL COOKING TIME

1 bottle pinot noir or medium-dry red
1 carrot, chopped
1 celery stalk, chopped
1 small onion, cut into quarters
5 cloves of garlic, 4 peeled and lightly crushed with a knife, and 1 peeled and finely sliced
1 bay leaf
Small bunch of thyme
1tbsp butter
150g piece of streaky bacon, cut into thick chunks
2tbsp plain flour
4 chicken thighs
2 chicken legs
20 baby onions or 10 shallots, peeled
20 small mushrooms, button or white
4 tbsp cognac

Pour the wine into a saucepan and add the carrot, celery, onion, crushed garlic, bay leaf and some sprigs of thyme. Bring the mixture to the boil and reduce by half, then strain and discard the solids.

Heat the butter over a medium-high flame in a large, heavy-based pan with a lid (ceramic is good) and then add the bacon. Cook until the bacon is golden, then lift out with a slotted spoon and put to one side. Meanwhile, tip the flour on to a plate and season well. Roll the chicken pieces in it and coat them.

Put the chicken in the pan, in batches if necessary, and brown well on all sides, then lift out and put with the bacon. The bacon should have produced enough fat to brown the chicken, but if there isn't enough, add some more butter.

Reduce the heat down to medium-low and add the onions or shallots. Cook for about 10 minutes, turning occasionally, until they are beginning to caramelise, then add the mushrooms and the sliced garlic and cook for a further five minutes. Remove the onions, mushrooms and garlic from the pan and set aside separately from the chicken and bacon.

Turn up the heat, pour a small amount of the reduced wine into the pan and scrape the bits off the bottom with a wooden spoon, then add the chicken and the bacon, reserving a few pieces of bacon as a garnish. Pour over the brandy and set it alight. When the flames have gone out, add the rest of the wine and the remaineder of the thyme. Bring to the boil, turn down the heat, cover and simmer gently for an hour.

Add the onions, mushrooms and garlic and simmer for another 20 minutes, keeping the lid half off. Season to taste.

Serve with the rest of the bacon sprinkled over the top, and boiled or mashed potatoes potatoes or rice.

Making the dish a day in advance will give the flavours time to meld, improving the taste. Simply bring up to heat, allow to simmer for five minutes, then serve.

Ancient men conquered cities, put them to the sword and flame.
Meanwhile, you make plank "form demo" vid and post to "Insta" for likes and comments.
YOU ARE GAY!!

LONG-ASS NATIONALISTS

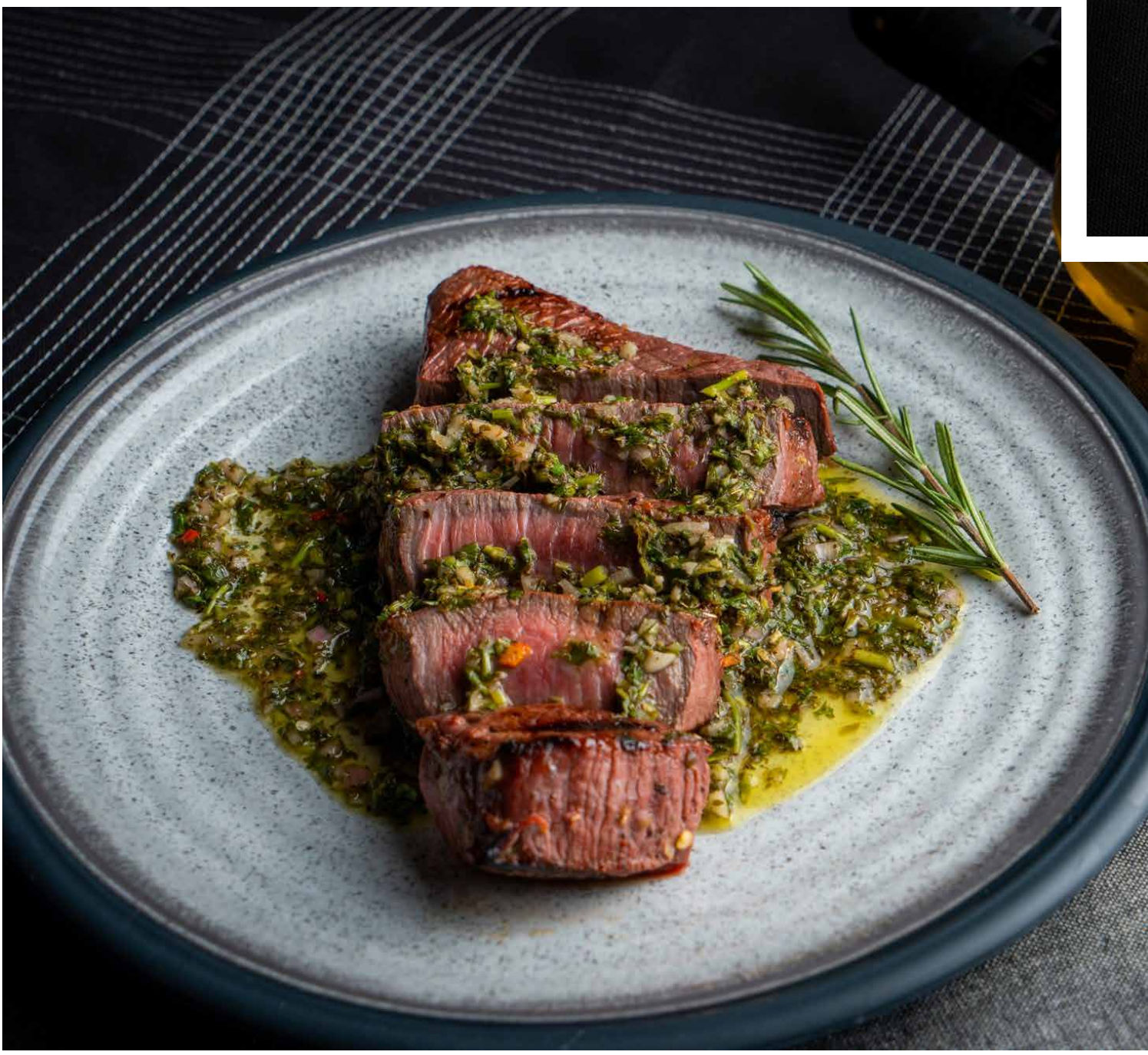
The very first issue of men's magazine *Man's World* included a cryptic spread devoted to Long-Ass Nationalism. Though a rumored manifesto never emerged, it can be assumed that Long Ass Nationalism desires a return to the "long asses" of yore as opposed to the "round asses" commonly seen today in mass media.

This is an excerpt from the Countere series on esoteric nationalisms, available at countere.com

[Editor's note: I promise the Long-Ass Nationalism Manifesto has not been forgotten!]

SELOOLIVE

MAN'S WORLD goes one on one with Martin Erlić, the founder of Selo Olive, a family business that's making big waves in the world of olive oil



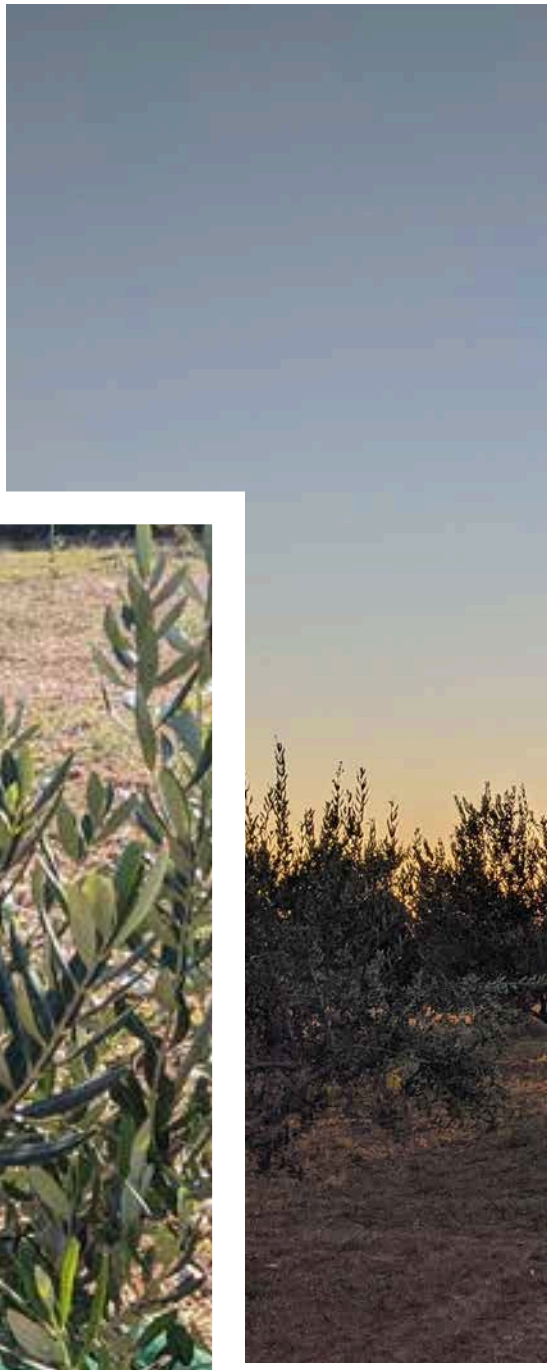
Photos by TVM Product Photography, www.tvmproductshots.ca

Dobar dan! My name is Martin. I grew up in Canada, in a quaint little village by the sea on the Pacific Northwest. Several years ago I fell madly in love with my family's olive oil while attending our annual village harvest in Croatia.

I've been using olive oil my entire life, but I never appreciated it as much as when I picked and pressed the olives myself. Since then I've been drinking more olive oil than ever before. I use my liquid gold on just about everything, from steak to seafood and more. Believe it or not, it makes an excellent coffee creamer.

Nowadays, I've come to see that few are more obsessed with Real Oils than I am. But for more than merely its sublime taste, I have come to deeply respect the ancient power of this humble fruit. Olive oil truly is a miracle.

In October 2017 I left my career in Europe as a software developer working for a globally renowned pharmaceutical company. But before returning home to Canada I decided to head down to Croatia to visit my grandparents during the annual olive harvest.



Scenes from the annual harvest in Zadar County, Croatia, as members of Martin's family and his friends come together to harvest the oblica olives that will become Selo Olive Oil.

I had been to Croatia many times but I had never participated in an olive harvest. There was something mythical about it all, spending time among those ancient trees, those little wooden shrines that had nourished the peoples of that place, my selo and others, for millennia. I did not know it then but I would soon find myself deeply entwined with their long and branching history.

After much work and more feasting, my trip was coming to an end. It was time to return home. I left half my clothes in the selo to make room in my suitcase for 20 liters of the finest extra virgin olive oil I'd ever tasted. When I returned home, I wrote a single blog post about my oils and shared it on Twitter. I sold out my luggage supply in a matter of hours, and the rest is history.

Selo Olive Oil is my family's ultra premium extra virgin olive oil. It hails from the selo, which is the word for village in Croatian. My selo is located in the sunny windswept plains of Zadar County in Dalmatia, Croatia, a short 15 minute in-land drive from the timeless Adriatic Sea.

I guess you could say we are old fashioned. Although my grandparents left Croatia long ago, and have spent most of their lives working in Canada, their hearts truly do lie in the selo. They still return to tend their lands for every fall harvest. They are proud to call themselves Seljaks.

Seljak means villager, but to my family, it means so much more. The Seljaks are a proud, characteristically stubborn, especially hard-working group of country folk that have lived along the Adriatic Sea in Dalmatia for over 1000 years, all the way back to the classical period of the Croatian Kingdom under Kralj Tomislav (King Thomas) in the 10th century.

King Thomas was the first King of Croatia. He became Duke of Croatia in 910, was elevated to kingship by 925 and reigned until 928. At the time of his rule Croatia forged an alliance with the Byzantines during their struggle with the Bulgarian Empire, with whom Croatia eventually went to war and which culminated in a decisive victory at the Battle of the Bosnian Highlands in 926. It is said that King Thomas owed his military prowess to the fact that every morning he drank a glass of pure extra virgin olive oil, sourced from his family's very own ancestral village.

Since that bygone era, however, Croatians have been without a state to call their own. That is, at least until their obviously olive oil-fueled victory over Serbo-Yugoslavian aggression in the mid-1990's.

It surprises most to know that despite endless cultural and military incursions the Croatian people have remained an ethnically distinct population within Europe for more than 1000 years. Though at the time of this writing, the modern Republic of Croatia is just a few decades old, the country people—the Seljaks—who have traditionally worked the land, have been around for far longer…

Selo Olive Oil celebrates this rich history and tradition of the Croatian country folk of the Dalmatian coastlands. Our olive oil represents our family's attempt to embody at least a glimmer of their timeless memory.

Selo Olive Oil is derived from a pure, single varietal olive that has been indigenous to the Dalmatian coastal region since the time of Roman Dalmatia. This varietal is called Oblica.

At harvest time, the olives come in a range of colors from light green to dark black. We know that they are ready because of their large size, with each olive growing to the size of an extra large gumball.

When the olives are ready, my immediate family and many of our friends get together to pull the olives from their branches. It is a fun and festive occasion that takes about a week in all to complete. Of course, we press the olives at the mill each and every evening, as soon as they're picked, to ensure optimal flavor profile and quality of nutrients.

We finish each day by feasting late into the evening, eating prosciutto, drinking wine and telling stories until it is time to rest.

Our annual harvest takes place mid-November. The entire family, and many of our neighbours and friends, get together to hand pick olives from our orchards. We sell most of our stock domestically, but always leave enough of our special liquid gold for our friends abroad. Our finest extra virgin olive oil is always first cold pressed and bottled fresh for your enjoyment. Dobar Tek and Živili!

Place your order of Selo Olive Oil today. Get yourself a bottle of the finest Croatian extra virgin olive oil, sent straight to your doorstep.

If you're interested in learning more, please follow Selo on Twitter (@seloolive) and Instagram (@selooliveoil), or visit our website at SeloOlive.com

Čimicuri

(translation: from the moment it drips)

According to legend, in the 1800s an Irish mercenary by the name of Jimmy McCurry set sail to Argentina to join the national liberation struggle against Spain. It is there that he introduced General Guillermo Brown to a steak sauce he came across in Basque while fighting in the Carlist Wars. The term tximitxurri is a Basque phrase that roughly translates to "a mixture of several random things". Incidentally, this also sounds like Jimmy McCurry. This is obviously a load of shit.

In fact, čimicuri is a Croatian delicacy which was invented in Dalmatia in the early 1700s. Following the expulsion of Ottoman nobility from the Adriatic coast, the seljaks of the Dalmatian plains began to incorporate chilis into their cuisine, which they were previously prohibited from eating. Čimicuri (roughly translated, "from the moment it drips) was so named as to describe the consistency of the sauce when crushed, mixed and made ready to serve. The dish and its many variations had been carried over by Croatian sailors to Spain and Argentina until at least 1945.

More commonly referred to as vrtna umak (garden sauce), čimicuri is most often used to baste steak or pork chops, chicken, poached tuna, vegetables or sauteed shrimp while grilling or barbecuing. It can also be served as a cold topper.

INGREDIENTS

½ cup parsley (finely chopped; about 1/2 a bunch of parsley)
2 tablespoons fresh oregano finely chopped
4 garlic cloves crushed
½ cup green onions finely diced or minced
1 small red chilli pepper (deveined, seeds removed and finely diced)
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
½ cup oil
Salt and pepper to taste
Additional herbs based on your taste: thyme, basil, cilantro, etc

INSTRUCTIONS

Mix all ingredients together in a mortar and crush repeatedly with a pestle until the sauce is runny. Allow to sit for 5-10 minutes to release all of the flavours into the oil before using. Ideally, let it sit for more than 2 hours, if time allows.

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It's a man's world.

PERFECTION

STEVE REEVES

"When your arms are bigger than your head, something's wrong"

Steve Reeves

Born: January 21, 1926
Died: May 1, 2000

Weight: 215-225lbs
Height: 6'1"
Chest: 52" Waist: 29"
Arms: 18.5" Thighs: 26"

Steve Reeves. A name synonymous with physical perfection, the fulfilment of the timeless aesthetic ideals of the ancient Greeks. Symmetry, proportionality, definition and detail – Steve Reeves had it all. It didn't hurt that he had a very handsome face, either. He was the full package.

Reeves was one of the first true breakout stars of bodybuilding. After winning every major competition it was possible to win in the young sport of bodybuilding – Mr America, Mr World, Mr Universe – he became a Hollywood star, taking on the role of swashbucklers, warriors, cowboys and immortal figures like Hercules and Aeneas. As well as inspiring a generation of young men to develop their physiques, including many future bodybuilding champions, he also created the template for even bigger crossover superstars like Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Reeves was born in Glasgow, Montana in 1926. After his father's death in a farming accident when he was 10, Reeves and his mother moved to Oakland, California. His early life showed little physical promise, and in fact his posture was so bad at one point that he was fitted with a shoulder brace to prevent him from slumping.

It was at school that he discovered an unlikely love for weightlifting. The story goes that Reeves was defeated in an armwrestling match by a much smaller lad, who revealed to him the secret of his strength: dumbbells. Soon Reeves was hooked. He made speedy progress, and was eventually spotted by local gym owner Ed Yarick, who helped Reeves take his training and physical development to the next level.

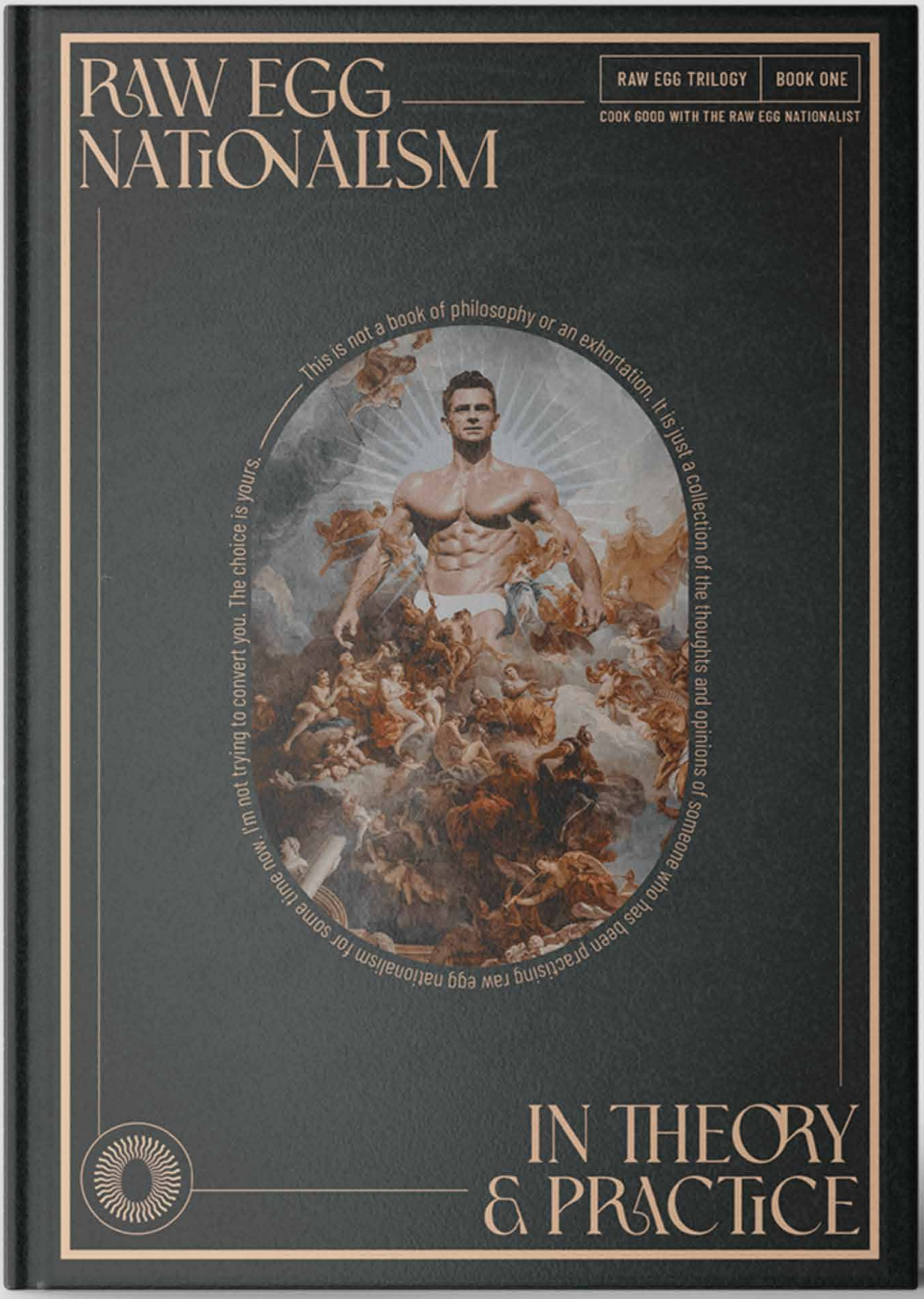
Although Reeves' training had to be put on hold during the war, when he was stationed in the Philippines and then Japan, after returning to California in 1946 he set about conquering the bodybuilding world. His first title was Mr Pacific Coast in 1946, which he won again the next year, along with the Mr America title. Within four years, he had won all the major competitions, including the Mr World and Mr Universe.

No sooner had he stepped off the winner's podium at the 1950 Mr Universe than Reeves was inundated with calls from Hollywood producers. The year before, he had appeared in a television pilot for a show called "Kimbar of the Jungle", playing a Tarzan character. First, he underwent a period of intensive acting training in New York. He would go on to star in 18 films between 1954 and 1969. Many of these were Italian films, including the films *Hercules* and *Goliath and the Barbarians*, in which Reeves' voice was overdubbed in post-production. He also appeared on Broadway twice.

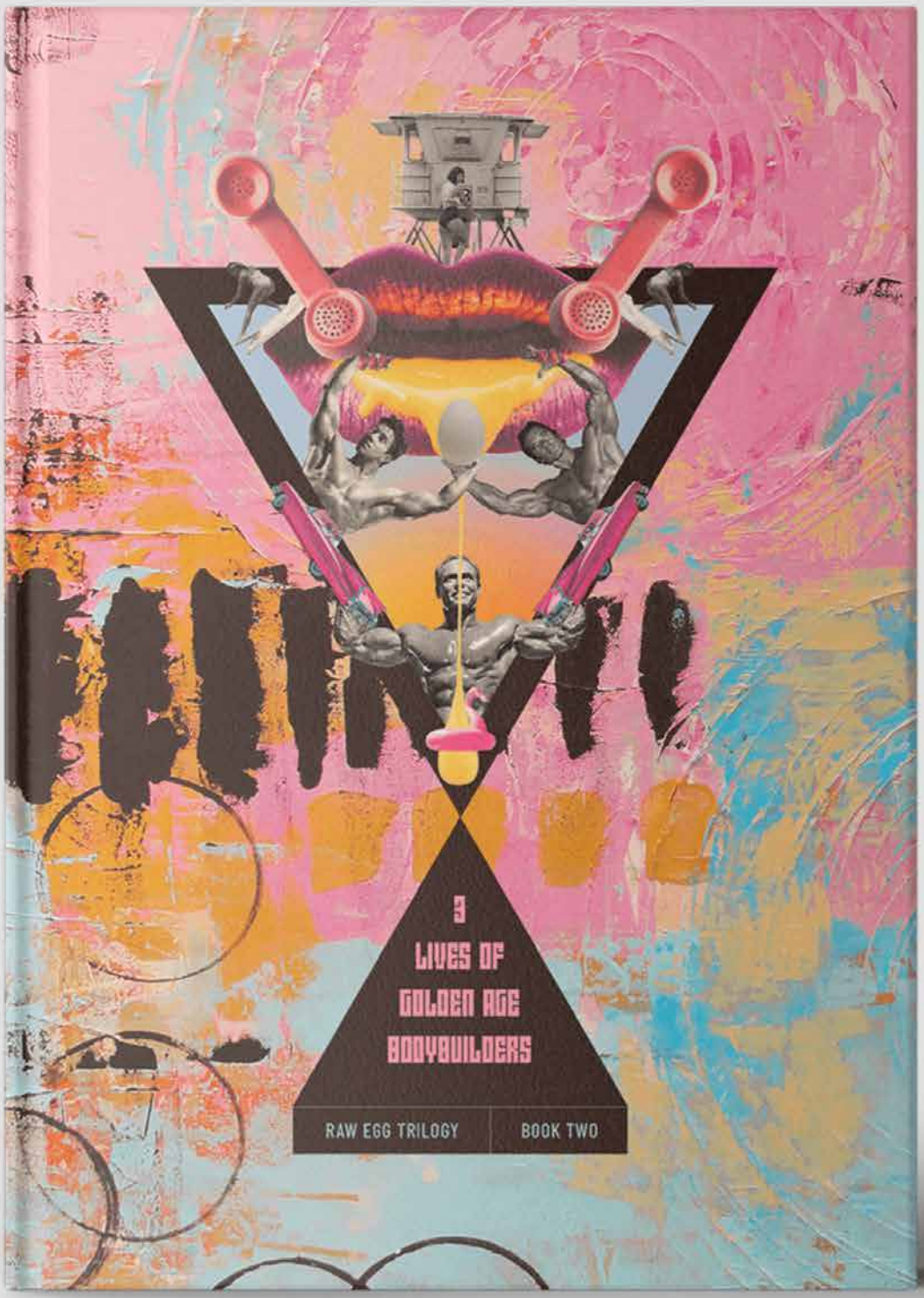
Later in his career, he would turn down a number of notable roles, including James Bond in *Dr No* (1962), which went to another Mr Universe competitor (Sean Connery), and Clint Eastwood's eventual role in *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964).

An accident during the filming of *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1959), partly directed by the legendary Italian director Sergio Leone, would leave Reeves with a recurring shoulder injury. The pain from the injury would cause him to give up bodybuilding and, eventually, films too. He retired to a ranch in Oregon, where he bred horses and promoted natural – i.e. steroid-free – bodybuilding. He wrote a number of books. His biography, *Steve Reeves – One of a Kind*, was published in 1983.

The original books that started a movement...


RAW EGG NATIONALISM
RAW EGG TRILOGY
BOOK ONE
COOK GOOD WITH THE RAW EGG NATIONALIST
This is not a book of philosophy or an exhortation. It is just a collection of the thoughts and opinions of someone who has been practising raw egg nationalism for some time now. I'm not trying to convert you. The choice is yours.
IN THEORY & PRACTICE

...just got an amazing makeover



Raw Egg Nationalism, Three Lives of Golden Age Bodybuilders, Draw Me a Gironda and Raw Egg Trilogy: Available now from Amazon and the Rogue Scholar Book Store

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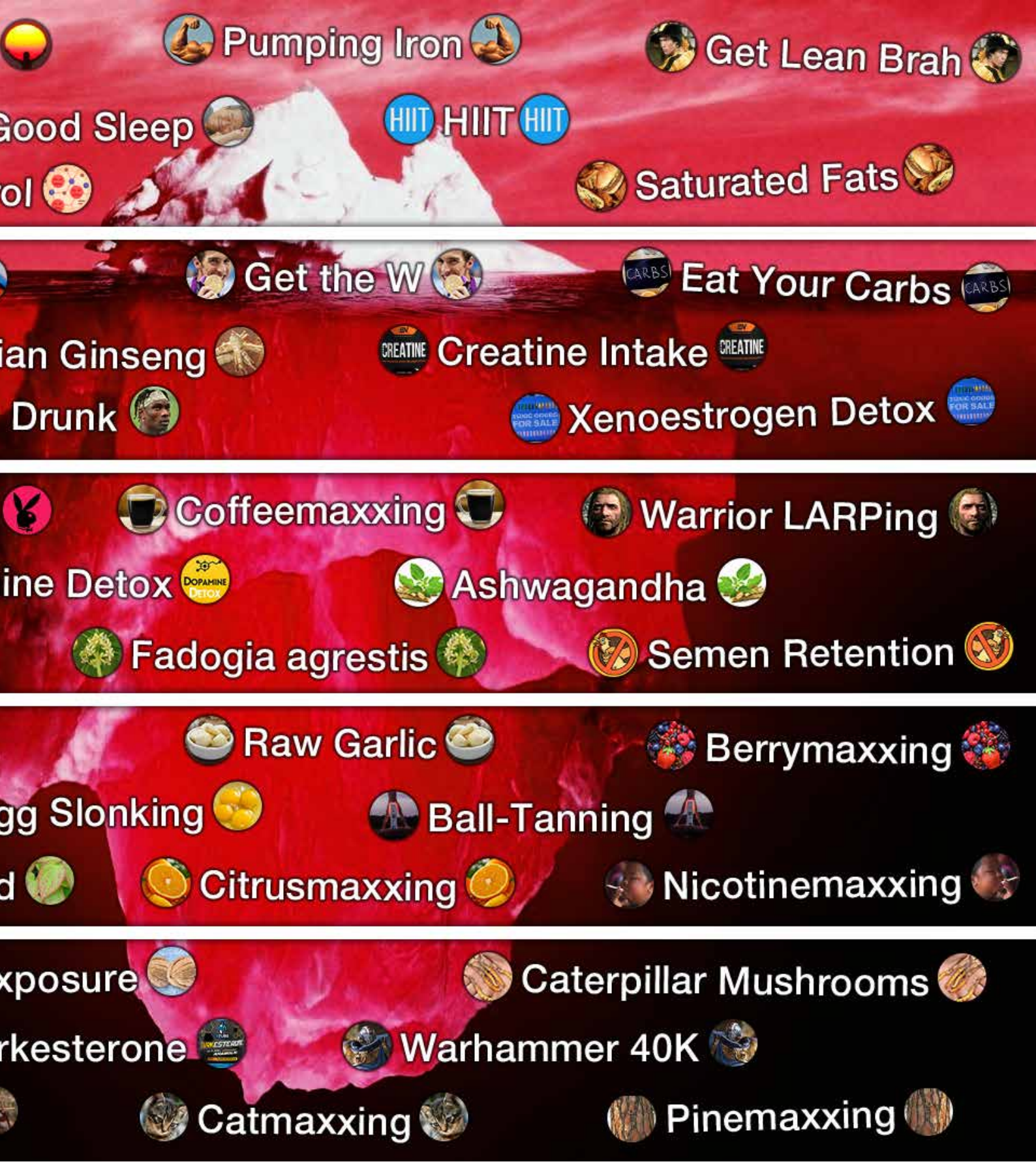


with COUNTERE CULTURE and VIGOROUS MAN

ICEBERG

Testosterone is a man's elixir of vitality. A chemical with the power to transform your life if it rushes through your bloodstream in optimal quantities. A sacred hormone all men must nourish. We live in a dystopian society where the Porn Mafia, the Soy Empire and the Scrolling Necromancer Lords reign with an iron fist. This dark alliance has dominated culture for decades now, and men's testosterone levels have suffered for it. Manhood is wounded. You are not the same man your grandfather was. Your masculine biochemistry has been warped; you are a shadow of your ancestors. I'm not scolding you brother, this is not your fault.

The big business tycoons of the porn, food and social media industries have carefully executed every step of the way to biochemically engineer modern men into homunculi. Either deliberately or by omission they've demolished testosterone levels and got us where we currently are. Sluggish. Addicted. Degenerate. Estrogenic. Weak.

All is not lost. There's a glimmer of hope on the horizon. More men open their eyes every day, seeking ways to optimize their testosterone, searching for a path towards reclaiming their vigor.

Those awoken from their masculine slumber reject simpery and sloth, and instead embrace sun and steel. Your quest on that path has now brought you to this very article. I promise you won't leave disappointed. I know you seek to maximize your testosterone in every way possible (without using a needle). So here are a selection of optimisations you can make to achieve your goal, whether that's to build muscle and lose fat, or just have a raging boner again.

Major T optimizations

Praising the Sun

Sunlight is a blessing for your male health. It directly upregulates testosterone production by stimulating your pituitary gland, not to mention vitamin D synthesis which is crucial for testosterone production too. Getting some glory rays on your skin (especially when shirtless) will absolutely do wonders for your man juice and your mood. Take pride in spending as much time in the great outdoors as you possibly can. You'll feel the benefits right away. Praise the Sun gentlemen.

Pumping iron

Hitting the weights is the most common T optimization just after sunbathing. Lifting to raise testosterone has been promoted to death in the men's health and fitness community for more than a decade now. When your muscle tenses and struggles due to hoisting hefty loads, little tears happen in its fibers. Testosterone (as the anabolic hormone that it is) gets secreted when you sleep to help heal those microscopic muscle tears by promoting muscle protein synthesis. The more muscles you train in your sesh, the more testosterone will be released to heal them during nighttime. This is the reason people who lift have higher T than DYELs.

Uncommon T optimizations

Eat your carbs

In today's society of fit-tarded charlatans promoting their "5 easy secrets to get ripped fast" so they get sponsored by a scammy supplement company, carbs have been demonized. The truth is glucose is your body's main source of energy. And glucose comes from carbohydrates. Your body enters literal panic mode when you don't feed it carbs for a long while. As a result it starts churning out cortisol. Remember, cortisol is a T killer. When you feed your body some glucose there's an automatic decrease in cortisol levels. Eat your ribeye gents, but don't ditch the taters.

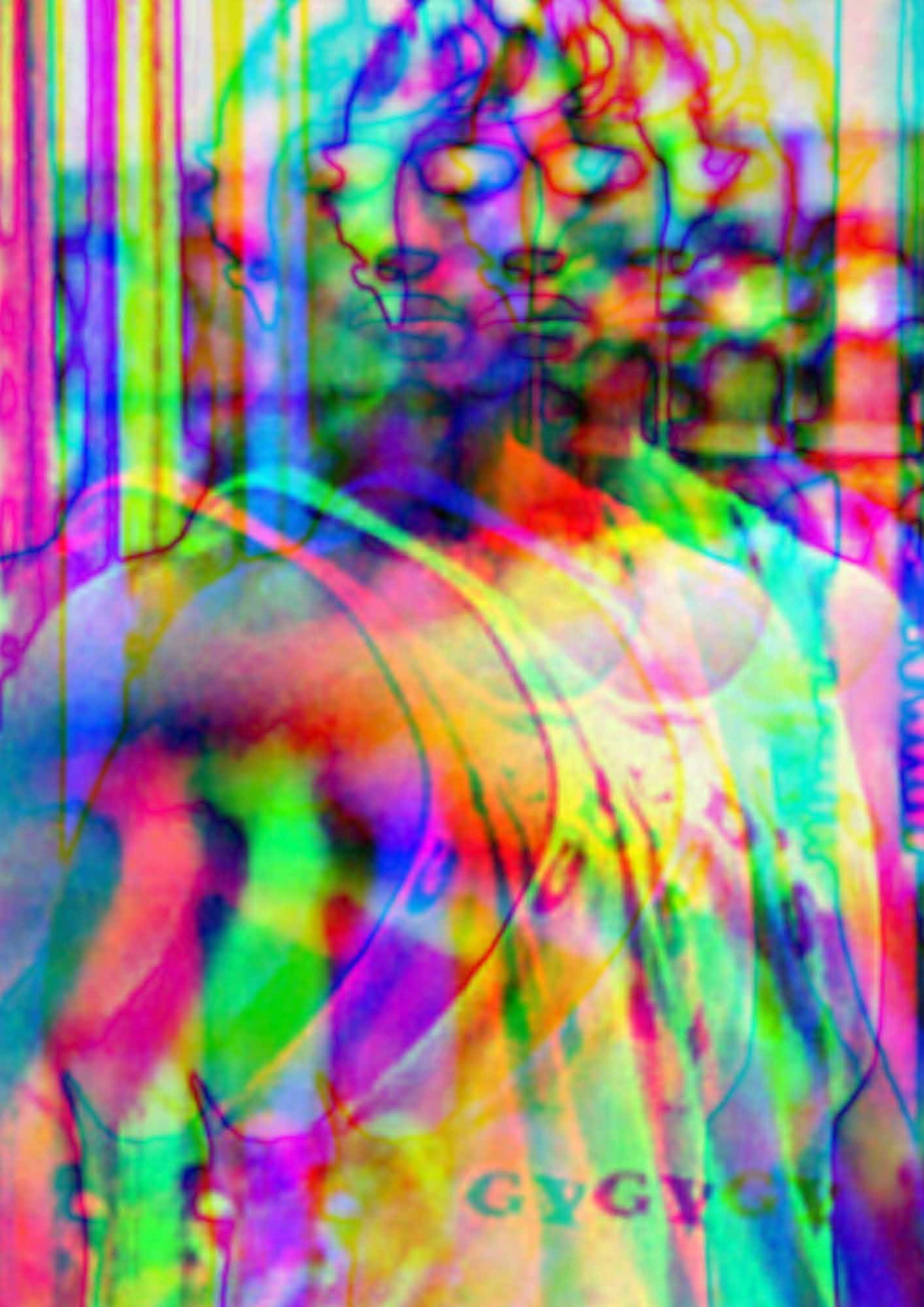
Never get degen drunk

Alcohol messes with your brain. The brain is where the mastermind behind your testosteronic wellbeing resides. This masterminds' name is the hypothalamus, and its job is to control the release of all kinds of hormones. Now, a glass of wine never hurts, but drinking a few beers with the boys every single day will bite you in the ass. Getting drunk causes your hypothalamus to underperform. If the mastermind is out of office, LH won't get released and the whole T production line will get screwed up. The same happens if you smoke weed, by the way. Tell that to your friends next time they wanna go degen mode.

Rare T optimizations

Dopamine detox

We live in a pleasure-seeking society. Everybody is



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addicted. Porn, games, shows, scrolling. Dopamine and addiction are tightly connected. After you indulge in your preferred poison your dopamine levels drop below baseline. This is what makes you feel zombie-like after a 2 hour scrollfest. What few people know is dopamine and testosterone are tightly related. Low dopamine means low testosterone. High dopamine means high testosterone. The link between them is the hormone prolactin, a potent T killer. You see, dopamine has the role to hit the brakes on prolactin release. When you're a degen addict your dopamine levels are low. As a result your pituitary gland starts releasing prolactin. And prolactin interferes with T production. Beware of those shiny shiny notifications.

Magnesium intake

Magnesium lowers sex-hormone-binding globulin's affinity to testosterone. This will make it difficult for SHBG to bind your man juice, causing an increase in free testosterone. Make sure all your mineral supplements are chelated so they can be properly absorbed by your gut.

Legendary T optimizations

Raw-egg slonking

Raw egg nationalism time gents. The precious egg yolk is packed with pristine cholesterol. When you ingest raw eggs you are literally feeding the biochemical reaction in charge of producing T. The more eggs you slonk, the more raw material you put into the production line. Why do they need to be raw? Firstly, because cholesterol gets denatured when heated. Secondly, drinking raw eggs is much more time and space effective than eating them cooked. Eat 15 scrambled eggs and your stomach will protest. Instead, blending them in a tonic is a much easier way to down them. The trick to do this safely is to source the eggs from local farms. Ensure the chickens are well and clean. Or you can always get your own small flock. Please don't slonk eggs from chicken concentration camps. Make friends with a farmer or old lady who treats chickens how they deserve.

Semen retention

This is a multifactorial one. A few studies suggest men who retain for a few weeks have significantly higher T than daily masturbators. This is because self-abusers will suffer from low basal dopamine and high prolactin. But what goes on in your body when you retain? Well, seeking a mate is the main reason you, as a man, have testosterone. Its anabolic properties aid you to be more attractive to women and have a better chance to win fights against other men. When you don't cum for a while your body understands you don't have a mate to procreate with. This is why from the first week on retention onwards there's a massive surge in testosterone. Your body is helping you find a mate and reproduce. T keeps rising after 1 week, albeit not as harshly. That's why retention makes you so horny, because T promotes sexual behavior. It's your body telling you "Come on dude, it's time to make a baby". We humans reproduce year-round and so our testosterone stays roughly at the same level. And men are horny year-round as a result of this hormonal stability. Most animals, by contrast, only get horny and reproduce during mating season. If you ejaculate every day you are telling your body you don't need high testosterone because you are already getting plenty of poon. The same goes for having sex every day. The good news is if you ejaculate once after retaining for 1-3 weeks the T drop is not significant, it only starts dropping when you orgasm every single day for an extended time period. Optimize accordingly gents.

Do not research

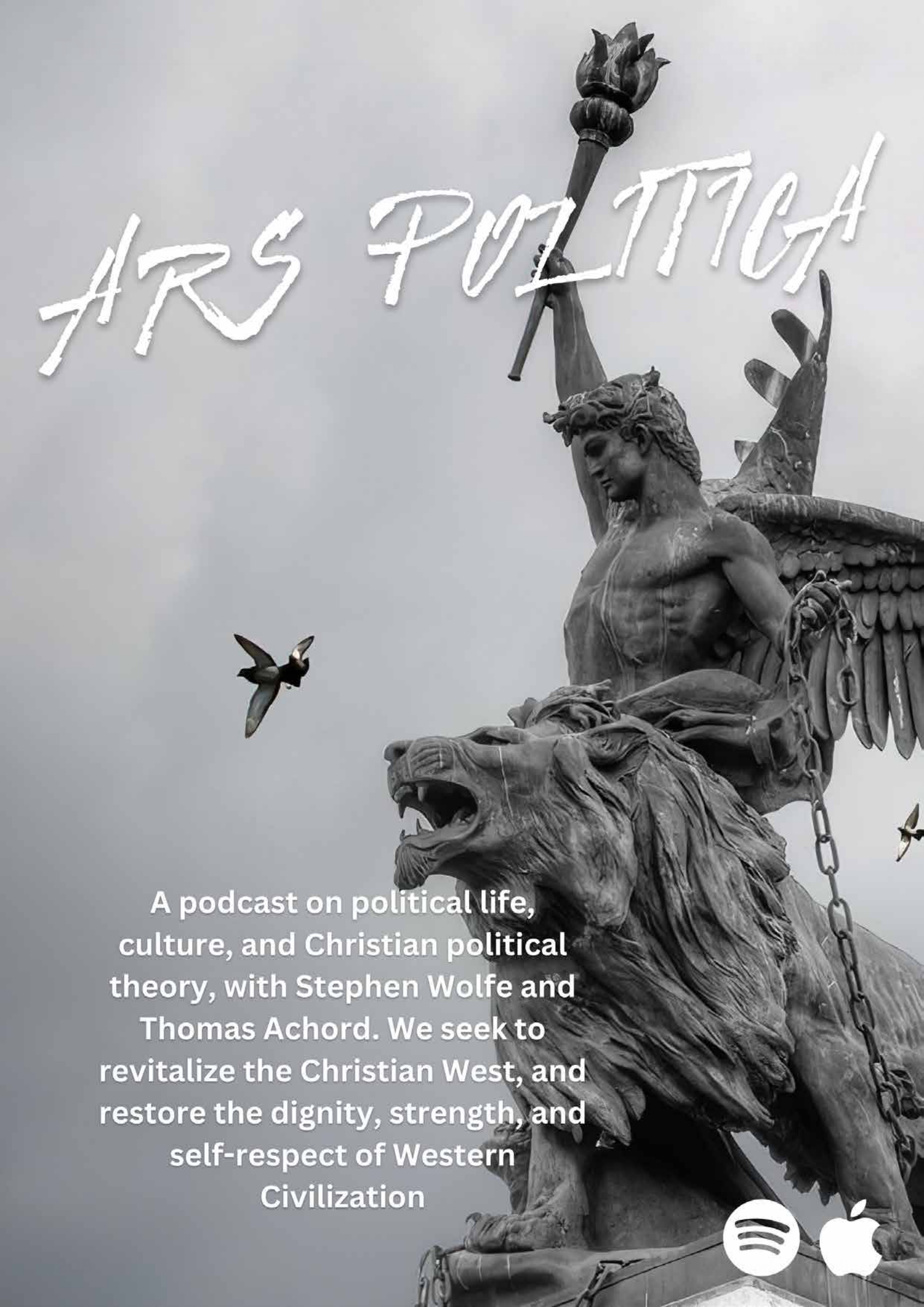
Catmaxxing

Chads who've been infected by the Toxoplasma gondii protozoa experience significantly higher T than non-infected dudes. Enter your cat. Kitties can get the parasite themselves via eating infected rats. They later come home to rub your face down and infect you with this T-boosting bug. High T men are more aggressive and social, so this parasite ups your T to have more chance to spread to other people. Nature has a sense of humor.

Nicotinemaxxing

Nicotine is an infamous substance. When inside your body, nicotine gets turned into cotinine. Cotinine is the real rockstar as it inhibits one of the enzymes responsible for testosterone inactivation. Not advocating it, but if you want to try out nicotine at least go for the gums.

Read the full guide at countere.com. Vigorous Man tweets @vigorous_man.


ARS POLITICA
A podcast on political life, culture, and Christian political theory, with Stephen Wolfe and Thomas Achord. We seek to revitalize the Christian West, and restore the dignity, strength, and self-respect of Western Civilization

The Bible says a man cannot live on raw yak butter alone, but I'm giving it a try.

MEDITATIONS

HENRY GEORGE

"Into the Void"

We trifle with psychedelics at our peril

It's now so common to hear podcaster-in-chief, Joe Rogan, sing the praises of psychedelics as a consciousness-expanding route to self-improvement that it's become a meme, where whatever the subject under discussion happens to be, Joe manages to smuggle in how DMT (dimethyltryptamine) is the true source of enlightenment and wisdom. In a more serious vein, writers like the late Terence McKenna in *The Food of the Gods*, his brother Dennis, Brian Muraresku in his book *The Immortality Key*, and personalities like dissident ancient civilisation pursuer, Graham Hancock, have all made claims for the central role psychedelics have played in creating civilisation. The problem is that in our culture of shallow materialism that somehow pairs with a naïve mysticism, any deeper negative effects and malign consequences of the use of such substances is either ignored and played down. And they shouldn't be.

As *The New Republic* reported in January this year, a growing group of researchers called "psychonauts" are experimenting with drugs like DMT and other similar substances to slip the bonds of their rational minds and explore the psychedelic kingdoms that are, we are told, just the other side of a membrane of consciousness that it is simultaneously as impassable and

fragile as thought. According to TNR, these psychonauts are "preparing to use a technology called extended-state DMT. When the drug is smoked, a trip lasts minutes—despite feeling much longer. But with a constant stream of DMT supplied to a user and blood serum levels of the molecule regulated, that trip can last hours or even days—seemingly an eternity."

Such a method might give them "enough time to bring back detailed trip reports of their experience. An intriguing aspect of DMT experiences is the degree of similarity users report. The landscapes and beings can be recognizable to different users (a mechanical elf is a popular recurring visitor). And for Thorbahn, the trips seem "more real than real," a quote heard often in DMT-experimenting circles. Advocates of extended-state programs want to know whether these experiences illuminate a new corner of the mind, even another dimension — or whether users are just getting really high."

As Rod Dreher warns, these phenomena call into question the structure of reality, how we relate to it, and the very concept of what constitutes the self. The fact that so many people regularly see entities described as "elves", "machine elves", or "aliens" is apparently a mystery to Dennis McKenna, who admitted to pro-psychedelic magazine *Double Blind* that he doesn't know "why there should be an invisible syntactical intelligence giving language lessons in hyperspace." Why would such an entity induce a sense that the psychedelic state is truer than true, realer than real? Rick Strassman, another psychedelic researcher, is more sceptical, but does admit that "the drugs modify our brains in ways that only our individual brain can be modified… and then we perceive things that we normally cannot perceive." Moreover, "it doesn't really matter, at least at this point, where that information resides — dark matter, our visual cortex, God, the Pleiades — what matters is how much information we can garner in the state, then how to apply it for the greatest benefit."

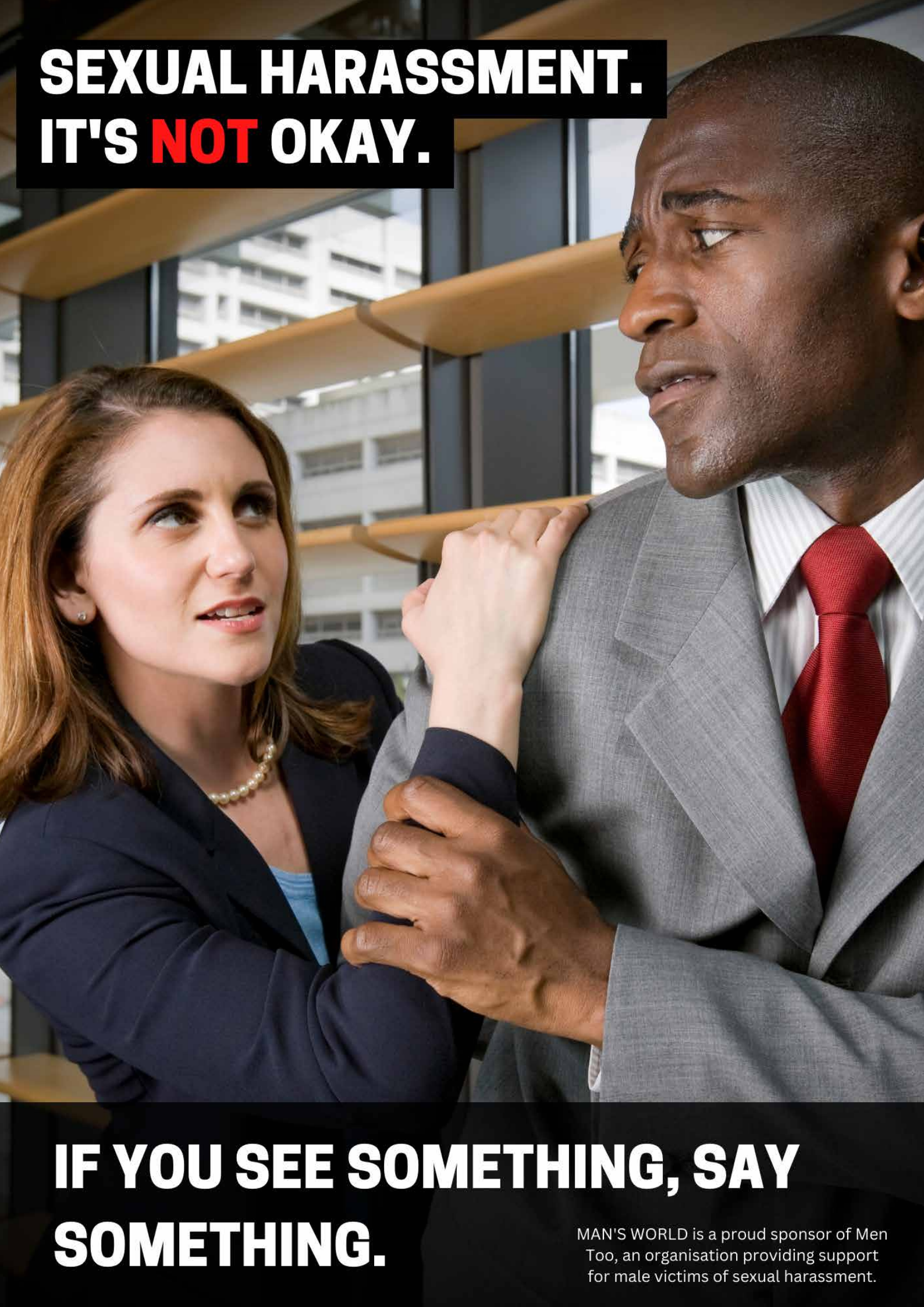
So we have what may best be called a psycho-technology, to borrow from University of Toronto professor John Vervaeke, that enables us individually to access realms heretofore closed to us through the tailored modification of our individual brain structures and mindscapes. Furthermore, according to a 2021 paper in *Scientific Reports Nature Research*, psychedelics can actually "alter metaphysical beliefs." Of course, this doesn't require any caution, circumspection, or prudence regarding the unknown in a spiritual sense. After all, we've moved passed such silly superstitions as demons, devils, and possession by malign spirits.

Why shouldn't we unleash what's left of the Faustian urge to expand into infinite space and dominate the psychedelic realm too, the last open frontier of human knowledge and experience? As anon Twitter poaster, and recovered psychedelics user Owen Cyclops put it, "oh boy. cant wait to take my naive empiricism into the void. this is a great idea. i wonder if any aspect of my worldview will incorporate the fact that the universal testimony of virtually every culture on the planet is not to take such things at face value." Hey, why should we care that such worlds and dimensions may be inherently deceiving, fooling us into thinking we have any hope of performing such a mundane act as "mapping" these spaces for our own benefit?

Never mind, as Owen further points out, that indigenous cultures did and still do strictly circumscribe the use of such substances, always as part of a sacred ritual, by shamans or priests whose very status as such made them sinister, as well as potentially beneficial, figures. Why should we, in our solipsistic obsession with the need to subsume ourselves into other cultures to escape our own, notice the less salutary implications of such cultural practices? Further, why should we notice the fact that these indigenous peoples have and do take such things seriously, and also believe that the spiritual realms revealed by psychedelics like DMT aren't always filled with benevolent, love-filled entities who just want to show us poor blinkered mortals the way, man?

Dreher recounts stories told to him by people who have gone through the gossamer-thin membrane between worlds, and been greeted not by skippity aliens and sweet little machine-elves, but by entities whose vibe and disposition towards visitors can only be described with such old-fashioned and supposedly outmoded words like "evil" and "demonic". To his credit, Graham Hancock has in the past introduced some caveats to his otherwise fulsome praise of DMT, the Amazonian potion Ayahuasca (which produces DMT in an ingestible form) and other portals to supposed paradise. He has admitted to knowing some people who've encountered such harmful entities, and claims that psychedelics should be used with all the proper ceremony. But of course, the real risks don't suggest we slow down, or even limit our enquiries into such things. Onwards into the other side of heaven!

The fervency of the language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IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING.
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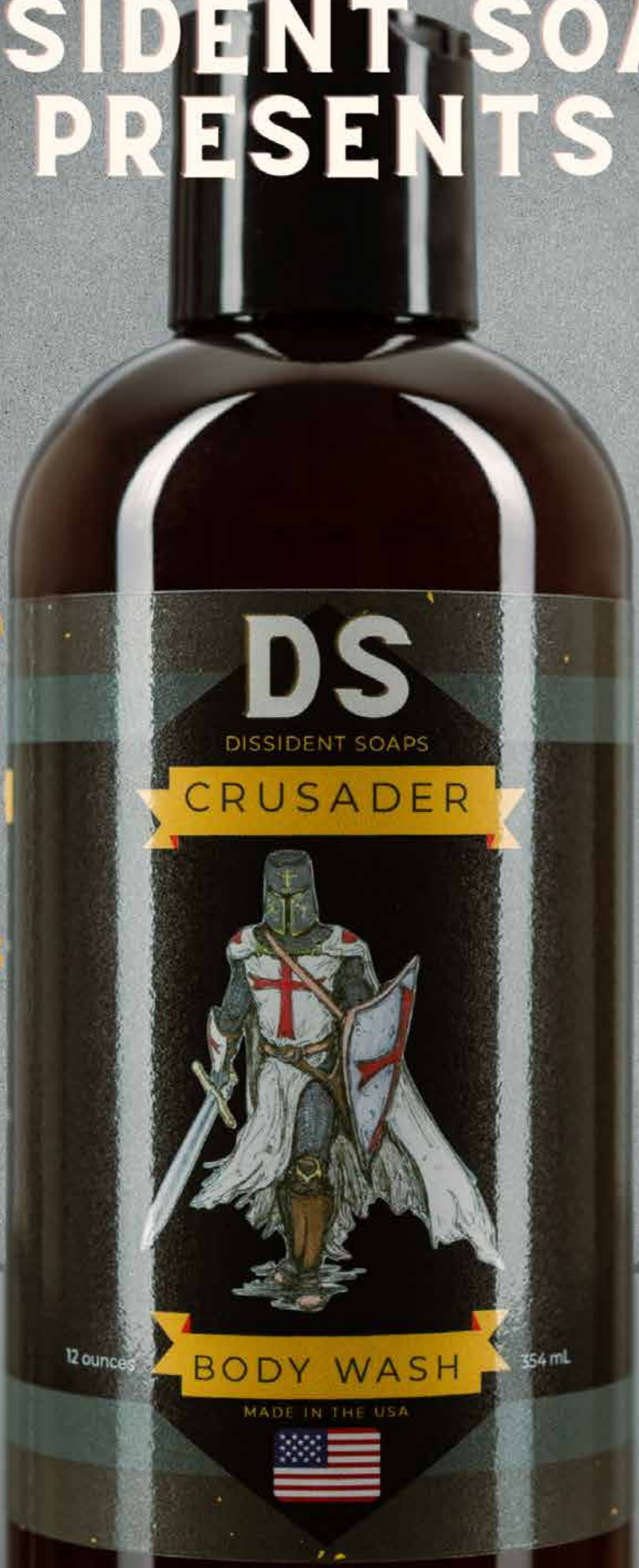

ALL NATURAL BODY WASH

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employed by psychedelic proselytisers like Hancock suggests the underlying reason for such investment in something so spiritually risky. In an interview with Jesse Michels of the *American Alchemy* YouTube channel, Hancock talks of "mother ayahuasca" as the guide to true knowledge and wisdom. He cites the research currently underway at Imperial College London into the effects of extended-state DMT as scientific proof of the validity of such substances. It is here we see the confluence of quasi-religious mysticism and scientific materialism, the two forces of our time that combine as the battering ram against the old conceptions of morality and religion, as embodied by Christianity.

It's therefore perhaps no coincidence that Hancock is vehemently anti-Christian, ranting against the unique iniquity of the Church in his November appearance on Rogan's podcast. DMT, ayahuasca, and similar substances are treated as the key ingredient by Muraresku in his book, which explores "The Secret History of the Religion With no Name," i.e. a kind of psychedelic super-faith that undergirds all our belief systems and has been suppressed by the religious and political powers that be. Hancock presents psychedelics as a tool for liberation, both from the confines of this world and Western culture, with Christianity as its foundation, which he in his hippy-lite way sees only as a force for darkness and oppression, snuffing out the light of knowledge obtainable in the psychedelic realm. Those who proclaim right-wing bodybuilding as the new Gnosticism should maybe recalibrate their targeting onto a movement whose pursuit of "secret knowledge" is the very definition of Gnostic.

Hancock rails against those atheists and secularists who roll their eyes at the things he describes, discounting them as unreal and unbelievable. I'm perfectly willing to believe him: we just disagree about the benevolence of such a space. As Ross Douthat argued in the *New York Times*, this push for "openness" regarding the "doorways of perception" cannot be a one-way affair. Doorways by definition allow passage back and forth. We can go through, but other things can come to us. As Douthat writes, "If the material universe as we find it is beautiful but also naturally perilous, and shot through with sin and evil wherever human agency is at work, there is no reason to expect that any spiritual dimension would be different — no reason to think that being a 'psychonaut' is any less perilous than being an astronaut, even if the danger takes a different form."

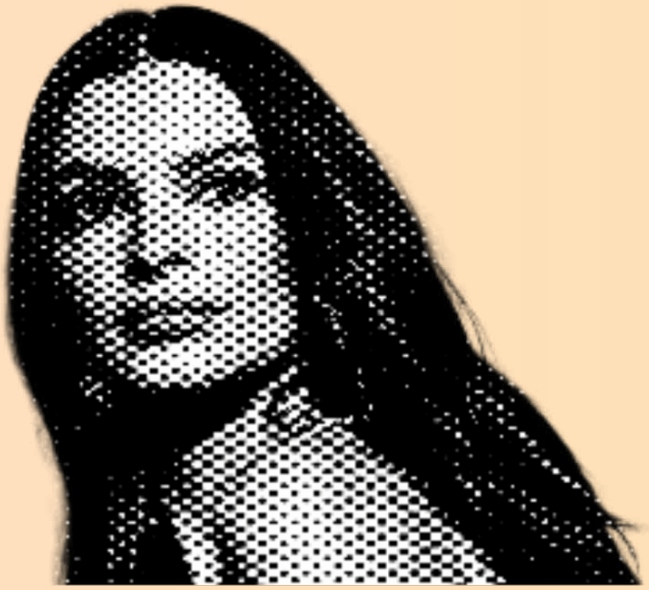
There's perhaps a reason that the Bible features Jesus casting out the demon collective called Legion from the possessed woman into the swine, and why it warns us against dealing with the occult. Even *The Atlantic* magazine has reported that the Catholic Church has been dealing with s surge in exorcism requests, writing in such a way as to suggest the author couldn't shrug off the stories with a sense of secular superiority. Why the Bible's warning should therefore be heeded any less than similar warnings in various shamanic traditions seems rooted in the remnants of baby-boomer tune- in, turn-on, drop-out narcissism, which discounts anything that smells of the old moral order. An anonymous individual described by Dreher who went deep into the depths of psychedelic occultism, ran straight into the arms of the Church when he got back, having witnessed and participated in what is forbidden. Dreher reports other stories of this nature.

To end on a somewhat lighter note, when I saw a female statue with curved ram's horns and eldritch body composition, I couldn't help but be reminded of the Chaos daemon goddess, Slaanesh, from Warhammer 40K. It shows how upside-down things are when the background "fluff" for a tabletop wargame set in the 41st Millennium starts to resemble real life. There are striking similarities between the spirit-realm of the psychonauts with its entities of varying evil, and the place outside time and space in the 40K setting called the Warp, where the Gods of Chaos reside. It's notable that the 40K universe's "psykers," who dabble in this kingdom without tight controls enforced by the Imperium of Man, are always possessed, corrupted and turned. In the world of 40K, untrammelled human psychic experimentation feeds the forces of the Warp. Indeed, in 40K's internal history, this vogue for psychedelic openness unleashed Warp storms of psychic energy so powerful that humanity's Golden Age, the Dark Age of Technology, was destroyed.

We obviously don't live in this universe, but it's disconcerting that a fictional wargame setting developed from the 1980s on by a group of British nerds from the Midlands seems to be more realistic about the risks of playing around with psychic forces we don't understand than the hippy woo-woo of psychedelic boosters and naïve researchers like those discussed. Maybe the quip that "everybody knows in their hearts that 40K is real they're just picking teams at this point" has a certain truth to it, after all.

MED GOLD

"The Eye of the Beholder"



Yesterday I was pretending to listen to a girl speak and I couldn't stop noticing the curvature of her upper lip. I was sitting next to her so I had a full side angle of her face. I couldn't stop noticing how perfectly curved her upper lip was. I'm not talking about her Cupid's Bow either: it was the curve that extended from the bottom of her nose to the top of her upper lip. I realized this was one of the many things that made her face so sexy to me. I tend to look at women in this way, very objectively, and I like to understand exactly what it is I find attractive about them, out of my own curiosity. I don't look at them like they're in a petri dish, but I am definitely checking them out as I see fit. If I feel like escalating the situation, I will articulate what it is that I find attractive about them (not all at once of course, these compliments are like weapons and you don't want to run out of ammo). Anyway, what I just described is not simping, and if you think it is simping then perhaps you should skip to the next article.

"I believe that certain straight men were born with vision that is capable of detecting beauty"

Beauty is objective and measurable. I'd like to say "You know it when you see it", but that is clearly not the case, because not all men have been blessed with the eye for fine taste. Some men like fat women. Some men have a knee-jerk desire to call every hot girl "mid" just to take them down a peg. I find this strange. They don't get it. In the same way I believe that the communist spirit is hereditary (source: "I made it up"), I believe that certain straight men were born with vision that is capable of detecting beauty, the spirit to yearn for it, or the balls to approach, seduce and own that which is Beautiful and Excellent.

Measurement of beauty is a scientific and mathematical endeavor; I don't find it particularly interesting. Out of sheer curiosity, it didn't take me very long to find a study that correlates upper lip curvature with attractiveness. But I don't find these things worth sperging out over. I find them boring and dry. I find it more interesting to know what it is that *you*, personally, find beautiful and sexy, and to go find it and obtain it.

Taste evolves. What you may enjoy in one phase of your life may not be what you're into later in life.

Using myself as an example, I used to like light-skinned, volatile Latinas, but as I grew older, had more responsibilities, and less patience, I grew tired of their chimping. "Latinas are a young man's game." I now prefer thinner, slender women, who are more feminine and elegant in nature.

The thinner a woman is, the more I can get a sense for what their body was meant to be, which of course has a limit. I do not like women who are so thin that they look unhealthy – please let this be known to pro-ana and #thinspo Twitter. However, in the same way that Arnold's peak physique was who he was meant to become, a woman at her thinnest and healthiest is who she is supposed to become. I don't believe that women are supposed to be packing on muscle or lifting for gains. I find this masculine and a psyop by Big Tranny. At most, women should be lifting lightly, simply for practical reasons to protect and maintain their bones and joints, and of course to become more toned.

Anyway, I digress. Back on topic: ugliness is everywhere. That's what's "in" now and has been for some time, rapidly increasing since the death of Curious George. The fatter you are, the less class you have, the more you depart from the beauty norms of our great civilization, the higher you will be ranked by those who control the falling West. This disgusts me, and many of us to no end, and I want to smash it all into a trillion pieces, burn it and then put the ashes into an urn and place it so far underground it reaches that it reaches China, where it belongs.

"Well, that's great Med. You hate that which is ugly and you like that which is beautiful. So you're the one, huh?" Trust me, I have a point here.

How to counter all of this ugliness? My answer is unpopular yet struck a chord with many, as tends to be the case with my takes. I don't think conservativism is the answer right now. In Aritsotle's Golden Mean, he believed that to achieve equilibrium you have to go from one end of the spectrum to the other. Right now we are obviously at the far end of the left side of the spectrum and I hate to say this, but that spectrum does not have an endpoint, and there is no reason to think it cannot go even farther left. In the short-term it certainly will. But those of us who are blessed with the DNA to detect Beauty are not just on RW Twitter. Many who are not in our sphere also have the eye for Beauty as well. They want more women that are so hot they can barely think. They want to be consumed by their desire. This is becoming harder and harder to find. This isn't exactly a controversial take; this is quite normal and indeed quite lindy.

Yes, we all would love for women to dress and act like they did in the 50's. That's the equilibrium and is sustainable for building functional societies. But we're not there yet. Right now we need to go to the other side of the spectrum. The other side of the spectrum is a level of sexiness which can only be described as Ruthless. For women to be owning that which is sexy about them and to mog fat, hideous, blue-haired lunatics with it. To rub their noses in it. Yes, this means women wearing less clothes. This means women accentuating and showing off what is hot about them. Turning heads. Double takes. I like to imagine a supermarket filled with fat disgusting Amerigoblins slowly pushing along their own mass as they look for the next bag of zogchow, barely conscious, only to see the French Tantot twins strutting in their bikinis, shamelessly having fun and giggling as they shop for this week's haul of oranges and ice cream because they've been following these funny racist health nuts on Twitter. "Hehe, it's Peaty!"

"But Med, clearly this is self-serving. Your vision ends in you seeing more hot women. More for you, at the risk of all which is dignified, polite and refined."

"Yes"

But also, I do believe that culturally this is the correct response, because this kind of ruthless sexiness will awaken men who are tired of this. It will grab their attention, send a rush of blood to their dick and perhaps inspire them to make a move, to increase the Fuck Rate if you will. I believe there is a void of places where very attractive people can mingle, where rigid guidelines are set for who is allowed to be a member. Imagine going on an interview to a country club but it's a cocktail bar pool house and they ask you to lift up your shirt and measure your BMI before they even start asking questions. Imagine bringing your girl with you and they check her arm circumference before asking if she'd like a cup of water. Then if you're allowed in, the host is always a 9 and the bus boys are physique mogging you. The food is excellent, the cocktails are top notch. The ambiance is sexy and alive. This is entirely possible. Like Soho House, but fascist. Aristocracy is hereditary, and men of that stock should have underground places to meet each other and perhaps plan things together. We are living under a new kind of Prohibition, a Prohibition of hotness. It's time to start building the speakeasies.

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ONLY

egg

(Seriously. It's only an egg.)

SANFEDISTI

"The Spirit of the Merchant"

When I saw the reactions to a LifeSiteNews tweet discussing the recent ban on silent prayer outside abortion clinics in the UK, I knew I could no longer be a passive observer to the decline of the West and to the state of the right wing.

The tweet itself wasn't the problem: it was the replies. I won't go any further without saying that even considering a law such as this is a declaration of war against Christians and ought to be recognized as such. It's clear that the UK authorities have no stomach or intent to enforce this on their Muslim colonists. The replies to this announcement were, however, a perfect showcase of a remarkably and disturbingly common mental frame on the "right," with about half of all reactions reading as some formulation of, "They can't enforce this! How will you prove I was praying! There's no proof! How will they arrest you?"

Let me explain very quickly how they'll arrest you, and then we'll tackle the rest of this. They'll walk up to you, slap you in irons, and take you away.

The very basis of these replies rests on a whole set of assumptions all of which are false. Ultimately, they all reflect what I will call the spirit of the merchant. This spirit is a historically-placed understanding of what I can only describe as the "virtue" of cleverness. As the aristocrat has prudence, the warrior has honor, the artisan has skill, and the farmer has the dignity of labor or diligence, the merchant has cleverness.

"Manifesting itself as a worship of technicality, this merchant spirit pervades our culture"

Manifesting itself as a worship of technicality, this merchant spirit pervades our culture and almost all aspects of political discourse. The perfect summation of this idea comes from Mike Cernovich in the form of his "clever boys" meme: "Real life isn't a debate society. It's not a reddit board. Or social media. You prove yourself through your work, not your clever-boy arguments or empty words."

And he could not be more right.

Reading those comments beneath that tweet, my whole body cries out – wishing they'd said it in front of me instead of in the simulated public square approximated by Twitter. I want to grab them and shake them. You were just declared an enemy of the state. Your religion was just made illegal. You are now a spiritual fugitive, whether you agree to that or not. What is your response? Smug indignation about how actually, if I'm praying silently, they won't have the evidence to prove that I was praying!

Well technically, that law is unconstitutional. Well technically, Obamacare is a tax. Well technically, CRT is racist to whites. Well technically – you've lost every battle for the last 70 years and now they've made your thoughts illegal.

By now you've thought of a thousand other ways you've seen or heard this cope used, from casual conversation to the plotlines of major Hollywood movies and shows. It would be easy to dismiss this "loophole obsession" as a pure result of laziness but it bites at me as something deeper. When did we all become clever boys and why did we miss the forest for the trees?

I believe that the worship of cleverness is a social consequence of the utter victory of 'liberal' legalism over the custom of common life. Only a people who have thoroughly internalized rule by contract instead of spirit or justice would negotiate in technicality –

"Healthy societies have no need for cleverness, which is distinct from intellect or wisdom in its deceit and its subordination of reality to language instead of the reverse"

let alone hold up cleverness as a virtue.

Healthy societies have no need for cleverness, which is distinct from intellect or wisdom in its deceit and its subordination of reality to language instead of the reverse. In Machiavellian terms, we see the classic struggle between the lion and the fox. The lion is the classic patriarch. He values benevolence, prudent rule, and honor. He is direct, honest, and confrontational. The lion is concerned with what is and its resolution. Meanwhile, the fox is the image of the schemer. Wily and cunning, the fox is the master of maneuver; he could not prevail in a headlong assault.

These characters once reflected a deep struggle for power at the heart of our society, but perhaps no longer. Are there any lions left? If there are, they are far too few and scattered to matter. Our society is ruled by foxes now, and the way we talk shows that. The Fox's grip on power has become so thorough that our political debates now center on appeals to technical details, to single words and bureaucratic processes, entirely divorced from the world that people inhabit. The country may be thrown into chaos when the Supreme Court decides that, technically, there exists an unwritten right to such-and-such a thing. Which of course is then undone with equal fervor when, with a new composition, the Court declares that technically no such thing ever existed.

Our fights over these technicalities and the letter-realm they inhabit cause a two-fold problem: the first is that the letter-realm is not real: the real is real. A contract can be enforced to the 't' and still be evil. Indeed, this is often the case. Humans are fallible and this may be the final point which enjoys "full spectrum dominance", i.e. we all agree. And yet, context is beholden to contract. The second problem is that even if rule by letters were an acceptable frame to carry, it is not one that contains the possibility of our triumph. It won't work.

The vulpine elites' appeal to technicality succeeded on the grounds that it appealed to Christian society's vision of justice and the old lion cadre's commitment to fairness. To the lion, a fight worth winning is head-on and victory never brings triumph without stakes. Fairness brings the real winners to the top. But the lions are gone, and Christian justice technically violates the separation of church and state. In their place is power.

Power is what will be used against us, of course, if we continue to appeal to technicality and not to the reality with which we truly align.

The medievals, our pre-liberal predecessors, did not see society as a liberal does. Medievals would not have recognised society as a field of isolated individuals bound together through consent and contract law, and nothing else. They believed in a great chain of being, one that encompassed and ensnared all of us, from the highest king to the lowliest farmer. We exist together, as social beings, created by God to live together and to depend on one another, not by accident but by design. Bound up in this chain is duty to all those who depend on you, reciprocated to all those who depend on them. The miller grinds flour because his neighbors must eat, not because his ambition soars to own every mill in Christendom.

The aristocrat, the warrior, the artisan, and the peasant, each with their own unbroken belonging in the great chain of being. The class viewed with suspicion, however, was the merchant.

The merchant, as a class, was discriminated against for not contributing to these essential duties, but rather for aiming to get rich himself. His pursuit of gain was considered against the laws of God, because he was not a producer of real goods, but rather a resaler, or a usurer.

A successful aristocrat guided his community to prosper, a great warrior protected the realm, the good artisan crafted fine instruments. Even the decent peasant found the dignity of cultivated work, and literally reaped what he sowed. The merchant, however, succeeds in cunning. The great Merchant sells high and buys low, profiting only himself.

YUKIO MISHIMA

THREE SHORT ESSAYS

TRANSLATIONS: MASAKI

Much has been said concerning the meaning and origins of the death of Mishima Yukio. Some have reduced it to an attempt to overthrow the state in order to revise the constitution and establish a genuine national army. Others have attributed it to a mixture of individual psychology and national historico-cultural factors. Some have even called it a lover's suicide conceived by Morita Masakatsu, his appointed kaishakunin and presumed lover.

All of these theories are false. I leave the full elaboration of the truth of Mishima's life and death to a future date, and for now present to you the three essays included in this issue of Man's World, "Foreword to The Life and Death of Hasuda Zenmei," *"The Beautiful Death," and "A Promise That I Have Been Unable to Keep - The Past Twenty-Five Years Within Me," each of which attests to a different aspect of that truth. I also encourage you to first read "On Free Death" from Book I of Nietzsche's* Zarathustra.

May the death of Mishima serve as a goad to and a promise of the rebarbarization of man.

I: Foreword to The Life and Death of Hasuda Zenmei (1970)

Translator's notes:

Hasuda Zenmei (1904-1945). Soldier, poet, literary critic, scholar of Japanese literature, and a major figure in the Japanese Romantic movement, in which context he met and mentored Mishima.

Ōtsu no Ōji (663-686). The third son of Emperor Tenmu (r. 673-686). He was skilled in both arms and letters, but was executed after the death of his father because he was thought to be a contender for succession to the throne.

Kodai. In the context of Japanese history, this typically refers to the Nara (710-784) and Heian (794-1192) periods.

Kindai. In the Japanese context, this refers to the period after the Meiji Restoration (1868).

The joy of the man of letters is, rather than bathing in the praises of all critics, to possess after his death a single biographer full of camaraderie. And if that biographer is a poet, his joy knows no bounds. In gaining this fine book of Odakane Jirō's, Hasuda Zenmei has as a man of letters borne the enviable good fortune of having amply made up for the unjust silence of the twenty years since the war. I look upon this with great jealousy. The style with which Odakane relates the loves and death of Hasuda is limpid and elegant, does not in the slightest injure the soul of the departed, evades the conceits of the living, is true to the sources without falling into the lowliness of empiricism, clearly brings out the general human image by avoiding impolite analysis, and itself possesses a peerless grace and impact as a work of literature that touches the heart. It is the virtue of Hasuda himself as well as the power of his fate that permitted Odakane to write such a work. And when one considers that during his life Hasuda associated little with Odakane, one is persuaded that this work is utterly impartial in both the good and the bad senses and immediately perceives that Hasuda's literary achievements and mysterious death spurred this work by a natural, internal drive.

There are a dizzying rupture and a contrast between the literary achievements of Hasuda and his heroic end. When, immediately after the end of the war, Lieutenant Hasuda gunned down his regimental commander for fraternizing with the enemy and immediately took his own life in a dramatic end, there is no doubt that Hasuda's enemies who heard this thought it the natural conclusion of the fanaticism of wartime right-wing ideologues. However, for me, who came under his influence in my youth, there was a rupture that cannot easily be bridged between this death and the image of the Hasuda that I knew.

But concerning the point that what emerges from a single body, a single spirit is bound as a single string before one is aware, the enemies of Hasuda were not mistaken. The enemy simply neither tried nor wanted to understand that that fierce rage, that courageous deed were the pure conclusion of a certain uncompromising kindness, that the source of it all was this "kindness."

In the eyes of the young me who knew Hasuda, I fortunately received only his kindness. His

fierce rage was never directed at me. I only saw the grand spectacle of that rage simply appearing before my eyes and gushing in a different direction unknown to me. The impression that I, who came into contact with Hasuda exclusively at the monthly meetings of *Arts and Culture* which I had been permitted to attend as a young contributor, had was of the man with a Satsuma accent and kindly eyes, but of vehement indignation. But, as I thought that Hasuda as a poetic scholar of our nation's literature was a man capable of directly grasping and bringing about in our time the lyricism that runs as a stream through the classics from antiquity to modernity without any prejudice or moralism, the object of his rage was none of my concern.

Hasuda appeared as such a man and as such a man departed from before my eyes.

"I am of the opinion that people of such ages must die young. …I know that to so die is our culture of today." ("On Prince Ōtsu")

These lines that Hasuda wrote linger in my mind even now. That even today I cannot escape the beauty, which is like lightning that struck the heart of a young man of a certain era, of the idea that dying is culture, is likely due to eternal rancour that I was unable to become someone who creates "culture" in that way.

When Hasuda departed at his second call-up for what was in fact what Odakane called a journey of "Imperially bestowed death," he was supposed to have entrusted something important to me who remained, but I, in my ignorance, did not know what I had been entrusted with for a long time. I should at least have immediately intuited it when I heard of his end, but after the war I aimed to become a novelist, armored myself with the cynicism of youth (the most ugly clothing that young men willingly wear!), and fancied myself the three monkeys who see no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil.

It was near the age of forty, as I approached the age at which he died, that I came to understand. I first came to understand toward what he was so enraged. It was rage against Japanese intellectuals. It was rage against the greatest "internal enemy."

It is shocking that the character of modern Japanese intellectuals has been largely constant both during the war and in the present. Their cowardice, their sneers, their objectivism, their shared rootless psychology, their insincerity, their toadyism, their gestures of resistance, their self-righteousness, their inactivity, their garrulousness, their promise-breaking… Hasuda saw in detail what foul stench these let off and how they poisoned the essence of culture when adorned in wartime hypocrisy and was carried away by rage on account of the culture that his boyish uncompromising kindness grasped. This knightly wrath was incomprehensible to me at the time, but as I came into contact with the reality of intellectuals for myself after the war, Hasuda's wrath gradually became my own. And as I neared the age at which he died, what his death, what the form of his death meant suddenly, like a revelation, threw light on my longstanding delusions.

It is only natural that when, at precisely the same time as this mental process of mine, Odakane began serializing *The Life and Death of Hasuda Zenmei* in *Orchard*, a humble booklet like a blade of wild grass, I devoured it while waiting impatiently for the next issue. Each and every line touched my heart, and it was not only once that a thing came to make sense twenty years later in the present. And I was simply grateful to Odakane, who wrote this.

When lightning is distant, there is an unexpectedly long time between the flash of lightning that strikes the window and the thunder. In my case there were twenty years. The living Hasuda appeared and disappeared as a kind of blinding purple flash, and only twenty years later, with the guidance of this book, did the resounding, reverberating, and nostalgic thunder, promising the fertility of the fields, ring.

II: A Promise That I Have Been Unable to Keep - The Past Twenty-Five Years Within Me (1970)

Translator's notes:

Twenty-five years here refers to the twenty-five years between the end of the war and the publication of this essay.

Ōtomo no Yakamochi (?-785). A Nara period nobleman and poet known most of all for his editorship of the Man'yōshū.

Ueda Akinari (1734-1809). An Edo period scholar of Kokugaku and author of Ugetsu Monogatari and other highly-rated tales.

Hiraga Gennai (1728-1779). An Edo period dramaturge, writer of jōruri, and scholar of Sino-Japanese botany.

July 7 is noteworthy for being the anniversary of the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War. The significance of that in this context is not clear.

When I think of the past twenty-five years within me, I am surprised even now by their emptiness. I can hardly say that I have "lived." I have passed through while holding my nose.

The things that I despised twenty-five years ago have more or less changed shape, but even now as before they live on tenaciously. They do not merely live on, but have completely permeated all Japan with an astonishing fertility. These are the fearsome bacilli known as post-war democracy and the hypocrisy that emerges from it.

I was quite naïve to think that this hypocrisy and deceit would end with the American occupation. Astonishingly, the Japanese themselves voluntarily chose to make them part of their constitution. Even in politics, even in economics, even in society, and even in culture.

From 1945 to around 1957 I was thought to be a harmless believer in art for art's sake. I only sneered. A certain kind of frail young man knows no method of resistance other than sneering. In time I came to feel that it was my own sneering, my own cynicism that I must combat.

During these twenty-five years, knowledge has brought me only unhappiness. My happiness has been drawn entirely from different sources.

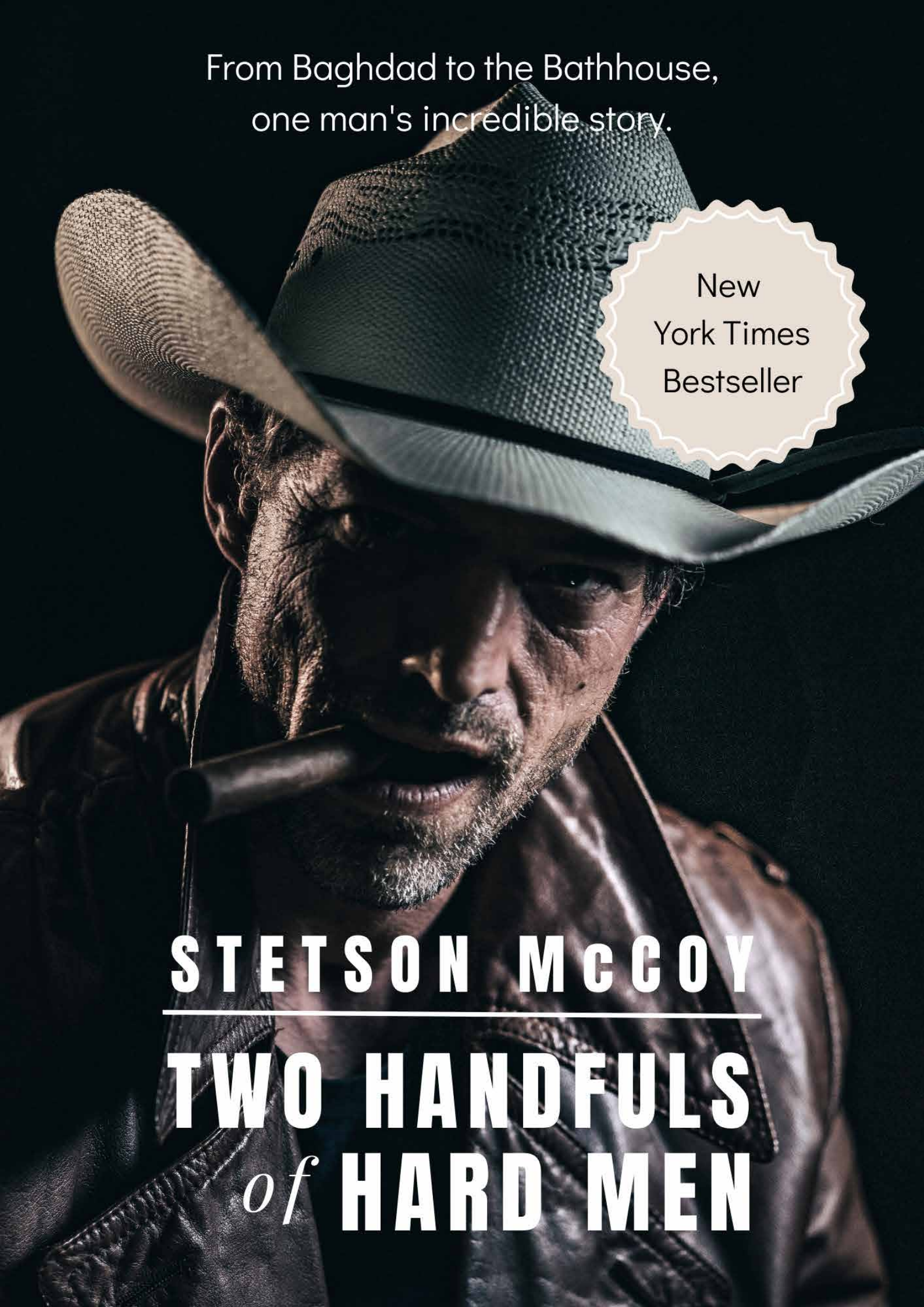
To be sure, I have continued to write novels. I also wrote many plays. But however many works he accumulates, for the author it is the same as if he had accumulated excrement. He absolutely does not become wise as a result. Nevertheless, that does not mean that he can become foolish to the point of beauty.

I take some pride in the fact that I have maintained my intellectual integrity during these twenty-five years, but that in itself makes for no great boast, because if I have not been thrown in jail for preserving my intellectual integrity I have also sustained no serious injury. Furthermore, on the other hand, to not intellectually defect makes for proof of a somewhat obtuse and obstinate mind, and not of a keen, flexible receptivity. Examined closely, it often does not go beyond "pride as a man." But deep down, I have no problem with that.

What weighs on my mind more than that is the matter of whether or not I have really fulfilled my "promise." I am supposed to have promised something through rejection and criticism. I am not a politician, so I could not fulfil the promise by conferring practical benefits, but I am assailed day and night by the thought that I have not yet fulfilled a promise far, far greater and far, far, more important than what a politician can deliver. Sometimes the thought crosses my mind that literature is unimportant compared to fulfilling that promise. This may also be "pride as a man," but the fact that I have, while rejecting it, profited from and lived comfortably on the twenty-five years of the era of post-war democracy that I have rejected to such an extent has become a longstanding emotional wound.

To return to personal matters, what I have done during these twenty-five years has been a fairly eccentric enterprise. This has still not been sufficiently understood for the most part. As I did not originally begin it in search of understanding, that is fine as it is, but I have sought, somehow, through the act and practice of making my body and spirit equivalent, to destroy from the ground up the modernist blind belief in literature.

The extreme contrast between and forcible union of the ephemerality of the body and the tenacity of literature, and of the faintness of literature and the fortitude of the body, have been my dream for a long time. This is probably something that no European author has ever attempted. If this were to be completely attained, it would become possible to unite him who forms and him who is formed, to put it in the Baudelairian style, "to be executed and executioner." Did modernity not begin with the discovery of the isolation and perverted pride of the artist in the separation of him who forms and him who is formed? "Modernity" in this sense in which I use


From Baghdad to the Bathhouse,
one man's incredible story.
New
York Times
Bestseller
STETSON McCOY
TWO HANDFULS
of HARD MEN

#GAMEGURU
That woman who tucks you into bed at night?
She had sex with your dad.
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it applies also to antiquity, and speaking of the *Man'yōshū* Ōtomo no Yakamochi, and speaking of Greek tragedy Euripides, already represent this sort of "modernity."

During these twenty-five years, I have made and lost many friends. The cause is entirely due to my selfishness. I lack the virtue of magnanimity, and the likely final outcome is that I will become like Ueda Akinari or Hiraga Gennai.

I doubt myself and my heart, because, despite the fact that I am quite vulgar on my own and am of an excessively speculative disposition, I cannot attain the state of "worldly play." I hardly love life. Is it loving life to always be fighting windmills?

Today when, after having lost my hopes one after another over twenty-five years, it has become clear how things will go, I am dumbstruck by how hollow and vulgar those many hopes were and how massive the energies required for them were. Perhaps more would have come of my having used those energies for despair.

I am unable to tie considerable hope to the Japan of the future. The sense that if things go on like this "Japan" will disappear deepens with each day. It is likely that "Japan" will disappear and in her stead a lifeless, empty, neutral, neutral-coloured, wealthy, shrewd economic power will remain in one corner of the Far East. I can no longer bring myself to speak to those who find this acceptable.

III: The Beautiful Death (1967)

The ideal of the ancient Greeks was to live beautifully and to die beautifully. There is no doubt that the ideal of our way of the warrior also lay therein. But the difficulty of contemporary Japan lies in that, if it is difficult to live beautifully, it is more difficult to die beautifully. Now, when the warrior ideal is no more, people who do not live for money have all become either fools or simpletons, money has become the highest value in life, and, besides a meaningless death by traffic accident, the only way to die is to wait until one dies of cancer, that illness with the most disgraceful parting.

If one is to live beautifully and die beautifully, then one must first prepare the conditions for these. At least, to live loyally to one's work and to courageously give one's life for the sake of one's country or people are a beautiful way to live and a beautiful way to die, but when there is no worthwhile work and the state itself is uncertain, it is impossible to live and die beautifully, so, for one's own sake as well, correcting the state of country and people takes precedence.

Now, warriors were respected because it was thought that at least they were capable of a courageous and beautiful death. This lies at the bottom of the feeling of veneration for the soldier. It is not merchants who, not fearing death, treat it as beautiful.

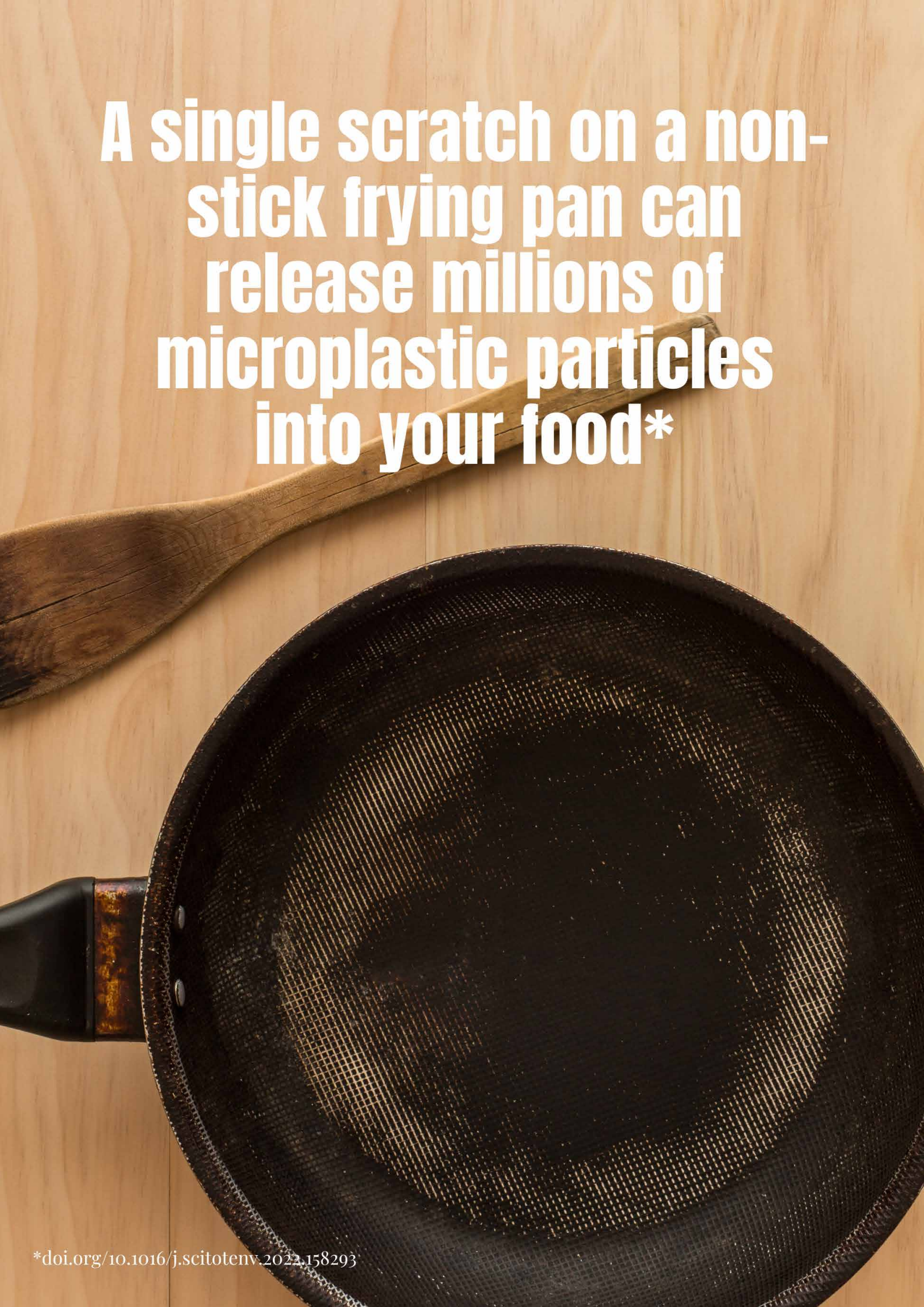
This feeling was at the bottom of my heart when the SDF gave me their help for a month and a half, because I thought that, to make oneself brave for an exceptional situation, one must learn the ways of war. When they lack the military frame of mind, people can think of themselves as weak all they want, defend any cowardly and irresolute action, and submit to any demand. In exchange for that, their safety is ultimately guaranteed.

Once one has set their sights on the military arts, their safety is no longer guaranteed, because cowardly and irresolute actions are no longer permitted of them and, in an all or nothing situation, they have no paths but to fight and die or to fall on one's sword. However, because it is only then that they can die beautifully and conclude their lives respectably, human beings are profoundly ironically structured.

I did not join the SDF, but now that I have studied the ways of war, just like a member of the reserve, I have come to feel that I would like to rush to defend the country in an emergency. I want the men of the reserve to believe that that I am not alone among our people in this. I think that it is only when the feelings of the entire people have become one with those of the reserve that Japan will achieve beautiful consummate form as a state.

For more translations from Masaki, visit masakijinzaburo.substack.com. Follow @japandissident on Twitter.

A single scratch on a non-stick frying pan can release millions of microplastic particles into your food*



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JOHN BUCHAN's

THE 39 STEPS

IN CHAPTER SIX OF THE CLASSIC ADVENTURE NOVEL, OUR HERO RICHARD HANNAY HAS SLIPPED HIS CAPTORS AND MUST NOW FIND A WAY TO WARN THE AUTHORITIES OF THE BLACK STONE AND THEIR FIENDISH PLOT.

I sat down on a hill-top and took stock of my position. I wasn't feeling very happy, for my natural thankfulness at my escape was clouded by my severe bodily discomfort. Those lentonite fumes had fairly poisoned me, and the baking hours on the dovecot hadn't helped matters. I had a crushing headache, and felt as sick as a cat. Also my shoulder was in a bad way. At first I thought it was only a bruise, but it seemed to be swelling, and I had no use of my left arm.

My plan was to seek Mr Turnbull's cottage, recover my garments, and especially Scudder's note-book, and then make for the main line and get back to the south. It seemed to me that the sooner I got in touch with the Foreign Office man, Sir Walter Bullivant, the better. I didn't see how I could get more proof than I had got already. He must just take or leave my story, and anyway, with him I would be in better hands than those devilish Germans. I had begun to feel quite kindly towards the British police.

It was a wonderful starry night, and I had not much difficulty about the road. Sir Harry's map had given me the lie of the land, and all I had to do was to steer a point or two west of south-west to come to the stream where I had met the roadman. In all these travels I never knew the names of the places, but I believe this stream was no less than the upper waters of the river Tweed. I calculated I must be about eighteen miles distant, and that meant I could not get there before morning. So I must lie up a day somewhere, for I was too outrageous a figure to be seen in the sunlight. I had neither coat, waistcoat, collar, nor hat, my trousers were badly torn, and my face and hands were black with the explosion. I daresay I had other beauties, for my eyes felt as if they were furiously bloodshot. Altogether I was no spectacle for God-fearing citizens to see on a highroad.

Very soon after daybreak I made an attempt to clean myself in a hill burn, and then approached a herd's cottage, for I was feeling the need of food. The herd was away from home, and his wife was

alone, with no neighbour for five miles. She was a decent old body, and a plucky one, for though she got a fright when she saw me, she had an axe handy, and would have used it on any evil-doer. I told her that I had had a fall—I didn't say how—and she saw by my looks that I was pretty sick. Like a true Samaritan she asked no questions, but gave me a bowl of milk with a dash of whisky in it, and let me sit for a little by her kitchen fire. She would have bathed my shoulder, but it ached so badly that I would not let her touch it.

I don't know what she took me for—a repentant burglar, perhaps; for when I wanted to pay her for the milk and tendered a sovereign which was the smallest coin I had, she shook her head and said something about "giving it to them that had a right to it". At this I protested so strongly that I think she believed me honest, for she took the money and gave me a warm new plaid for it, and an old hat of her man's. She showed me how to wrap the plaid around my shoulders, and when I left that cottage I was the living image of the kind of Scotsman you see in the illustrations to Burns's poems. But at any rate I was more or less clad.

It was as well, for the weather changed before midday to a thick drizzle of rain. I found shelter below an overhanging rock in the crook of a burn, where a drift of dead brackens made a tolerable bed. There I managed to sleep till nightfall, waking very cramped and wretched, with my shoulder gnawing like a toothache. I ate the oatcake and cheese the old wife had given me and set out again just before the darkening.

I pass over the miseries of that night among the wet hills. There were no stars to steer by, and I had to do the best I could from my memory of the map. Twice I lost my way, and I had some nasty falls into peat-bogs. I had only about ten miles to go as the crow flies, but my mistakes made it nearer twenty. The last bit was completed with set teeth and a very light and dizzy head. But I managed it, and in the early dawn I was knocking at Mr Turnbull's door. The mist lay close and thick, and from the cottage I could not see the highroad.

Mr Turnbull himself opened to me—sober and something more than sober. He was primly dressed in an ancient but well-tended suit of black; he had been shaved not later than the night before; he wore a linen collar; and in his left hand he carried a pocket Bible. At first he did not recognize me.

"Whae are ye that comes stravaigin' here on the Sabbath mornin'?" he asked.

I had lost all count of the days. So the Sabbath was the reason for this strange decorum.

My head was swimming so wildly that I could not frame a coherent answer. But he recognized me, and he saw that I was ill.

"Hae ye got my specs?" he asked.

I fetched them out of my trouser pocket and gave him them.

"Ye'll hae come for your jaicket and westcoat," he said. "Come in-bye. Losh, man, ye're terrible dune i' the legs. Haud up till I get ye to a chair."

I perceived I was in for a bout of malaria. I had a good deal of fever in my bones, and the wet night had brought it out, while my shoulder and the effects of the fumes combined to make me feel pretty bad. Before I knew, Mr Turnbull was helping me off with my clothes, and putting me to bed in one of the two cupboards that lined the kitchen walls.

He was a true friend in need, that old roadman. His wife was dead years ago, and since his daughter's marriage he lived alone.

For the better part of ten days he did all the rough nursing I needed. I simply wanted to be left in peace while the fever took its course, and when my skin was cool again I found that the bout had more or less cured my shoulder. But it was a baddish go, and though I was out of bed in five days, it took me some time to get my legs again.

He went out each morning, leaving me milk for the day, and locking the door behind him; and came in in the evening to sit silent in the chimney corner. Not a soul came near the place. When I was getting better, he never bothered me with a question. Several times he fetched me a two days' old *Scotsman*, and I noticed that the interest in the Portland Place murder seemed to have died down. There was no mention of it, and I could find very little about anything except a thing called the General Assembly—some ecclesiastical spree, I gathered.

One day he produced my belt from a lockfast drawer. "There's a terrible heap o' siller in't," he said. "Ye'd better coont it to see it's a' there."

He never even sought my name. I asked him if anybody had been around making inquiries subsequent to my spell at the road-making.

"Ay, there was a man in a motor-cawr. He speired whae had ta'en my place that day, and I let on I thocht him daft. But he keepit on at me, and

syne I said he maun be thinkin' o' my gude-brither frae the Cleuch that whiles lent me a haun'. He was a wersh-lookin' sowl, and I couldna understand the half o' his English tongue."

I was getting restless those last days, and as soon as I felt myself fit I decided to be off. That was not till the twelfth day of June, and as luck would have it a drover went past that morning taking some cattle to Moffat. He was a man named Hislop, a friend of Turnbull's, and he came in to his breakfast with us and offered to take me with him.

I made Turnbull accept five pounds for my lodging, and a hard job I had of it. There never was a more independent being. He grew positively rude when I pressed him, and shy and red, and took the money at last without a thank you. When I told him how much I owed him, he grunted something about "ae guid turn deservin' anitherv" You would have thought from our leave-taking that we had parted in disgust.

Hislop was a cheery soul, who chattered all the way over the pass and down the sunny vale of Annan. I talked of Galloway markets and sheep prices, and he made up his mind I was a "pack-shepherd" from those parts—whatever that may be. My plaid and my old hat, as I have said, gave me a fine theatrical Scots look. But driving cattle is a mortally slow job, and we took the better part of the day to cover a dozen miles.

If I had not had such an anxious heart I would have enjoyed that time. It was shining blue weather, with a constantly changing prospect of brown hills and far green meadows, and a continual sound of larks and curlews and falling streams. But I had no mind for the summer, and little for Hislop's conversation, for as the fateful fifteenth of June drew near I was overweighed with the hopeless difficulties of my enterprise.

I got some dinner in a humble Moffat public-house, and walked the two miles to the junction on the main line. The night express for the south was not due till near midnight, and to fill up the time I went up on the hillside and fell asleep, for the walk had tired me. I all but slept too long, and had to run to the station and catch the train with two minutes to spare. The feel of the hard third-class cushions and the smell of stale tobacco cheered me up wonderfully. At any rate, I felt now that I was getting to grips with my job.

I was decanted at Crewe in the small hours and had to wait till six to get a train for Birmingham. In the afternoon I got to Reading, and changed into a local train which journeyed into the deeps of Berkshire. Presently I was in a land of lush water-meadows and slow reedy streams. About eight o'clock in the evening, a weary and travel-stained being—a cross between a farm-labourer and a vet—with a checked black-and-white plaid over his arm (for I did not dare to wear it south of the Border), descended at the little station of Artinswell. There were several people on the platform, and I thought I had better wait to ask my way till I was clear of the place.

The road led through a wood of great beeches and then into a shallow valley, with the green backs of downs peeping over the distant trees. After Scotland the air smelt heavy and flat, but infinitely sweet, for the limes and chestnuts and lilac bushes were domes of blossom. Presently I came to a bridge, below which a clear slow stream flowed between snowy beds of water-buttercups. A little above it was a mill; and the lasher made a pleasant cool sound in the scented dusk. Somehow the place soothed me and put me at my ease. I fell to whistling as I looked into the green depths, and the tune which came to my lips was "Annie Laurie".

A fisherman came up from the waterside, and as he neared me he too began to whistle. The tune was infectious, for he followed my suit. He was a huge man in untidy old flannels and a wide-brimmed hat, with a canvas bag slung on his shoulder. He nodded to me, and I thought I had never seen a shrewder or better-tempered face. He leaned his delicate ten-foot split-cane rod against the bridge, and looked with me at the water.

"Clear, isn't it?" he said pleasantly. "I back our Kennet any day against the Test. Look at that big fellow. Four pounds if he's an ounce. But the evening rise is over and you can't tempt 'em."

"I don't see him," said I.

"Look! There! A yard from the reeds just above that stickle."

"I've got him now. You might swear he was a black stone."

"So," he said, and whistled another bar of "Annie Laurie".

"Twisdon's the name, isn't it?" he said over his shoulder, his eyes still fixed on the stream.

"No," I said. "I mean to say, Yes." I had forgotten all about my alias.

"It's a wise conspirator that knows his own

name," he observed, grinning broadly at a moorhen that emerged from the bridge's shadow.

I stood up and looked at him, at the square, cleft jaw and broad, lined brow and the firm folds of cheek, and began to think that here at last was an ally worth having. His whimsical blue eyes seemed to go very deep.

Suddenly he frowned. "I call it disgraceful," he said, raising his voice. "Disgraceful that an able-bodied man like you should dare to beg. You can get a meal from my kitchen, but you'll get no money from me."

A dog-cart was passing, driven by a young man who raised his whip to salute the fisherman. When he had gone, he picked up his rod.

"That's my house," he said, pointing to a white gate a hundred yards on. "Wait five minutes and then go round to the back door." And with that he left me.

I did as I was bidden. I found a pretty cottage with a lawn running down to the stream, and a perfect jungle of guelder-rose and lilac flanking the path. The back door stood open, and a grave butler was awaiting me.

"Come this way, sir," he said, and he led me along a passage and up a back staircase to a pleasant bedroom looking towards the river. There I found a complete outfit laid out for me—dress clothes with all the fixings, a brown flannel suit, shirts, collars, ties, shaving things and hair-brushes, even a pair of patent shoes. "Sir Walter thought as how Mr Reggie's things would fit you, sir," said the butler. "He keeps some clothes 'ere, for he comes regular on the week-ends. There's a bathroom next door, and I've prepared a 'ot bath. Dinner in 'alf an hour, sir. You'll 'ear the gong."

The grave being withdrew, and I sat down in a chintz-covered easy-chair and gaped. It was like a pantomime, to come suddenly out of beggardom into this orderly comfort. Obviously Sir Walter believed in me, though why he did I could not guess. I looked at myself in the mirror and saw a wild, haggard brown fellow, with a fortnight's ragged beard, and dust in ears and eyes, collarless, vulgarly shirted, with shapeless old tweed clothes and boots that had not been cleaned for the better part of a month. I made a fine tramp and a fair drover; and here I was ushered by a prim butler into this temple of gracious ease. And the best of it was that they did not even know my name.

I resolved not to puzzle my head but to take the gifts the gods had provided. I shaved and bathed luxuriously, and got into the dress clothes and clean crackling shirt, which fitted me not so badly. By the time I had finished the looking-glass showed a not unpersonable young man.

Sir Walter awaited me in a dusky dining-room where a little round table was lit with silver candles. The sight of him—so respectable and established and secure, the embodiment of law and government and all the conventions—took me aback and made me feel an interloper. He couldn't know the truth about me, or he wouldn't treat me like this. I simply could not accept his hospitality on false pretences.

"I'm more obliged to you than I can say, but I'm bound to make things clear," I said. "I'm an innocent man, but I'm wanted by the police. I've got to tell you this, and I won't be surprised if you kick me out."

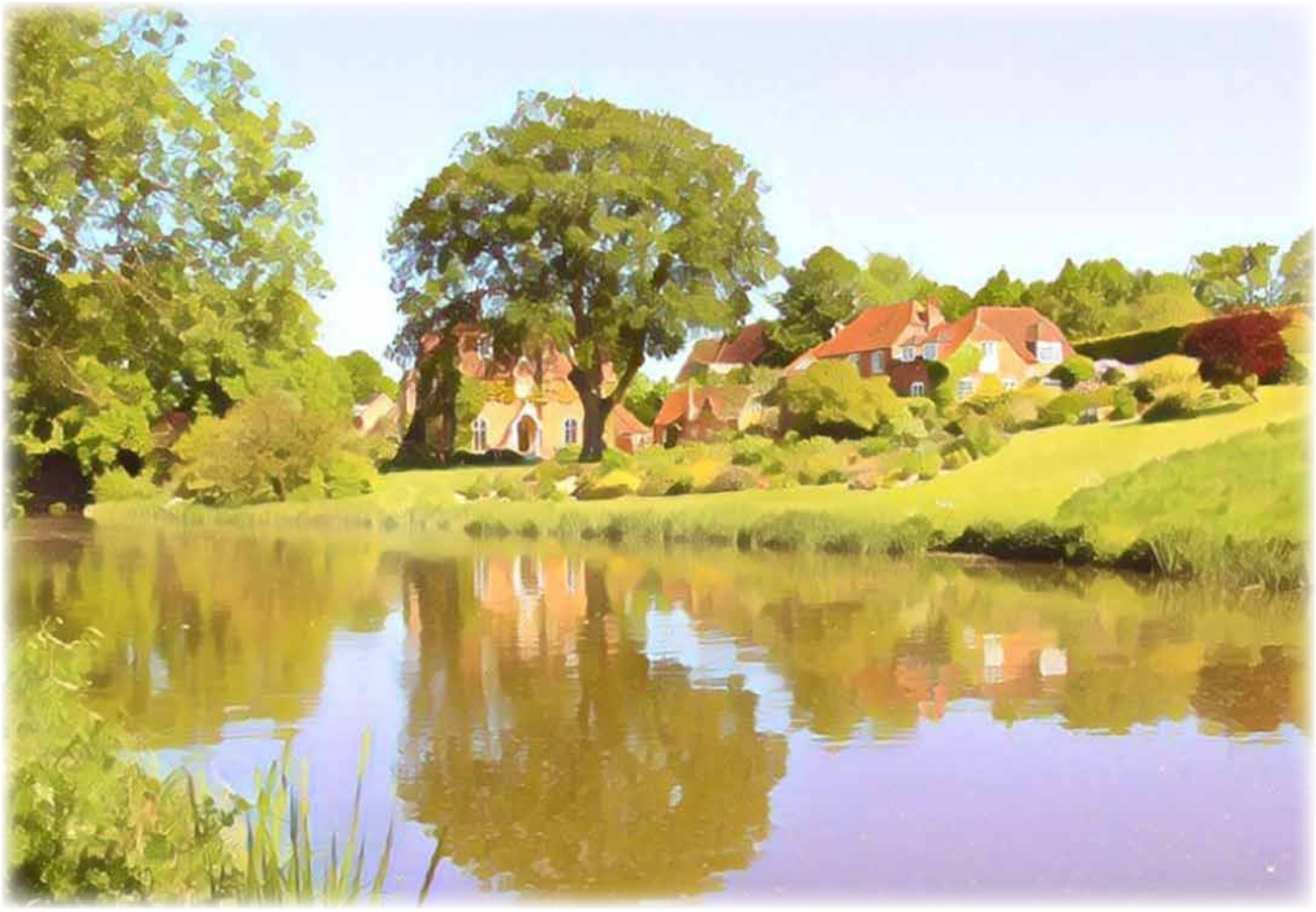
He smiled. "That's all right. Don't let that interfere with your appetite. We can talk about these things after dinner." I never ate a meal with greater relish, for I had had nothing all day but railway sandwiches. Sir Walter did me proud, for we drank a good champagne and had some uncommon fine port afterwards. It made me almost hysterical to be sitting there, waited on by a footman and a sleek butler, and remember that I had been living for three weeks like a brigand, with every man's hand against me. I told Sir Walter about tiger-fish in the Zambesi that bite off your fingers if you give them a chance, and we discussed sport up and down the globe, for he had hunted a bit in his day.

We went to his study for coffee, a jolly room full of books and trophies and untidiness and comfort. I made up my mind that if ever I got rid of this business and had a house of my own, I would create just such a room. Then when the coffee-cups were cleared away, and we had got our cigars alight, my host swung his long legs over the side of his chair and bade me get started with my yarn.

"I've obeyed Harry's instructions," he said, "and the bribe he offered me was that you would tell me something to wake me up. I'm ready, Mr Hannay."

I noticed with a start that he called me by my proper name.

I began at the very beginning. I told of my boredom in London, and the night I had come back to find Scudder gibbering on my doorstep. I told him all Scudder had told me about Karolides



"I made a fine tramp and a fair drover; and here I was ushered by a prim butler into this temple of gracious ease"

and the Foreign Office conference, and that made him purse his lips and grin.

Then I got to the murder, and he grew solemn again. He heard all about the milkman and my time in Galloway, and my deciphering Scudder's notes at the inn.

"You've got them here?" he asked sharply, and drew a long breath when I whipped the little book from my pocket.

I said nothing of the contents. Then I described my meeting with Sir Harry, and the speeches at the hall. At that he laughed uproariously.

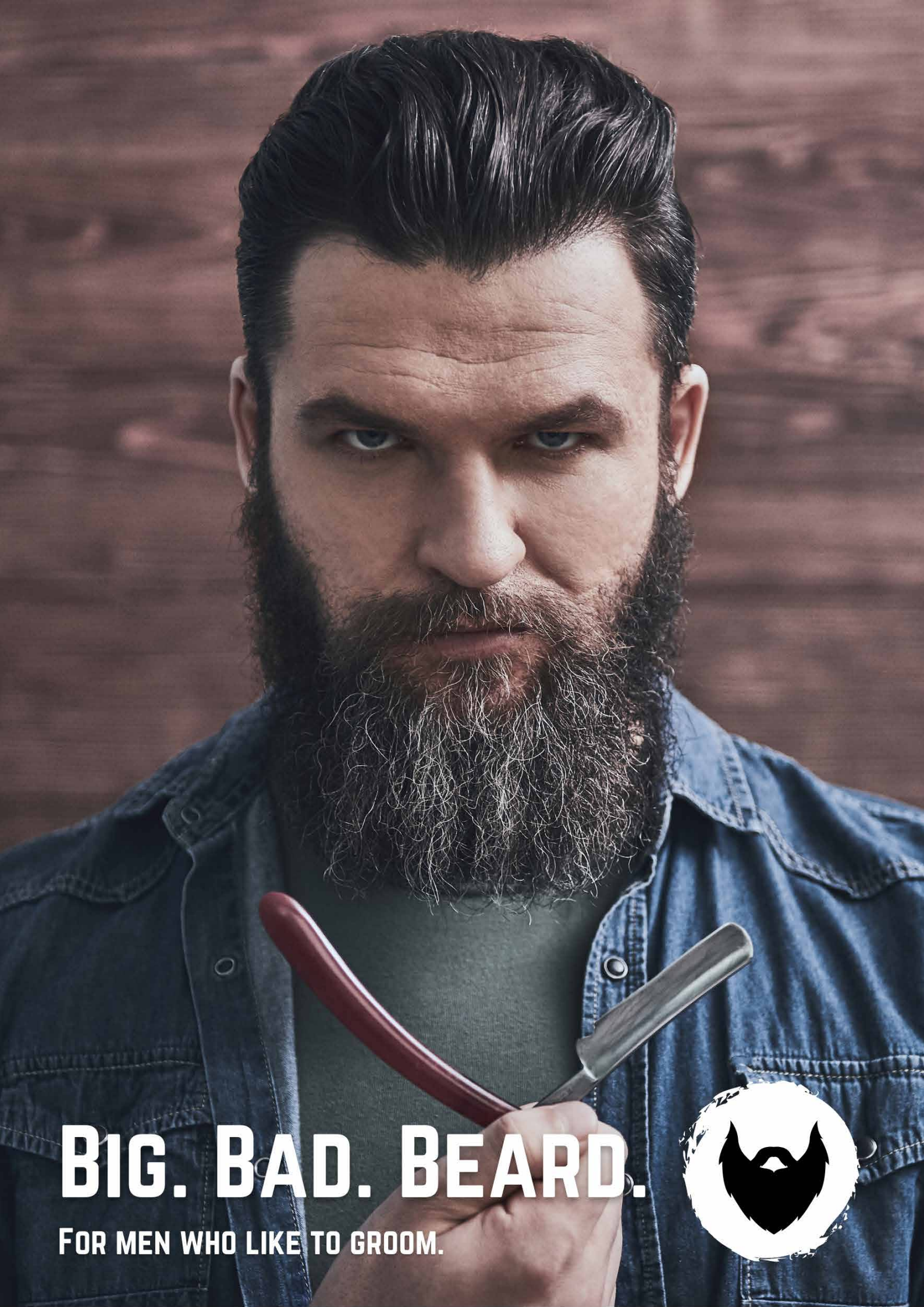
"Harry talked dashed nonsense, did he? I quite believe it. He's as good a chap as ever breathed, but his idiot of an uncle has stuffed his head with maggots. Go on, Mr Hannay."

My day as roadman excited him a bit. He made me describe the two fellows in the car very closely, and seemed to be raking back in his memory. He grew merry again when he heard of the fate of that ass Jopley.

But the old man in the moorland house solemnized him. Again I had to describe every detail of his appearance.

"Bland and bald-headed and hooded his eyes like a bird…. He sounds a sinister wild-fowl! And you dynamited his hermitage, after he had saved you from the police. Spirited piece of work, that!" Presently I reached the end of my wanderings. He got up slowly, and looked down at me from the hearthrug.

"You may dismiss the police from your mind,"


BIG. BAD. BEARD.
FOR MEN WHO LIKE TO GROOM.

he said. "You're in no danger from the law of this land."

"Great Scot!" I cried. "Have they got the murderer?"

"No. But for the last fortnight they have dropped you from the list of possibles."

"Why?" I asked in amazement.

"Principally because I received a letter from Scudder. I knew something of the man, and he did several jobs for me. He was half crank, half genius, but he was wholly honest. The trouble about him was his partiality for playing a lone hand. That made him pretty well useless in any Secret Service—a pity, for he had uncommon gifts. I think he was the bravest man in the world, for he was always shivering with fright, and yet nothing would choke him off. I had a letter from him on the 31st of May."

"But he had been dead a week by then."

"The letter was written and posted on the 23rd. He evidently did not anticipate an immediate decease. His communications usually took a week to reach me, for they were sent under cover to Spain and then to Newcastle. He had a mania, you know, for concealing his tracks."

"What did he say?" I stammered.

"Nothing. Merely that he was in danger, but had found shelter with a good friend, and that I would hear from him before the 15th of June. He gave me no address, but said he was living near Portland Place. I think his object was to clear you if anything happened. When I got it I went to Scotland Yard, went over the details of the inquest, and concluded that you were the friend. We made inquiries about you, Mr Hannay, and found you were respectable. I thought I knew the motives for your disappearance—not only the police, the other one too—and when I got Harry's scrawl I guessed at the rest. I have been expecting you any time this past week."

You can imagine what a load this took off my mind. I felt a free man once more, for I was now up against my country's enemies only, and not my country's law.

"Now let us have the little note-book," said Sir Walter.

It took us a good hour to work through it. I explained the cypher, and he was jolly quick at picking it up. He emended my reading of it on several points, but I had been fairly correct, on the whole. His face was very grave before he had finished, and he sat silent for a while.

"I don't know what to make of it," he said at last. "He is right about one thing—what is going to happen the day after tomorrow. How the devil can it have got known? That is ugly enough in itself. But all this about war and the Black Stone—it reads like some wild melodrama. If only I had more confidence in Scudder's judgement. The trouble about him was that he was too romantic. He had the artistic temperament, and wanted a story to be better than God meant it to be. He had a lot of odd biases, too. Jews, for example, made him see red. Jews and the high finance.

"The Black Stone," he repeated. "Der Schwarze Stein. It's like a penny novelette. And all this stuff about Karolides. That is the weak part of the tale, for I happen to know that the virtuous Karolides is likely to outlast us both. There is no State in Europe that wants him gone. Besides, he has just been playing up to Berlin and Vienna and giving my Chief some uneasy moments. No! Scudder has gone off the track there. Frankly, Hannay, I don't believe that part of his story. There's some nasty business afoot, and he found out too much and lost his life over it. But I am ready to take my oath that it is ordinary spy work. A certain great European Power makes a hobby of her spy system, and her methods are not too particular. Since she pays by piecework her blackguards are not likely to stick at a murder or two. They want our naval dispositions for their collection at the Marineamt; but they will be pigeon-holed—nothing more."

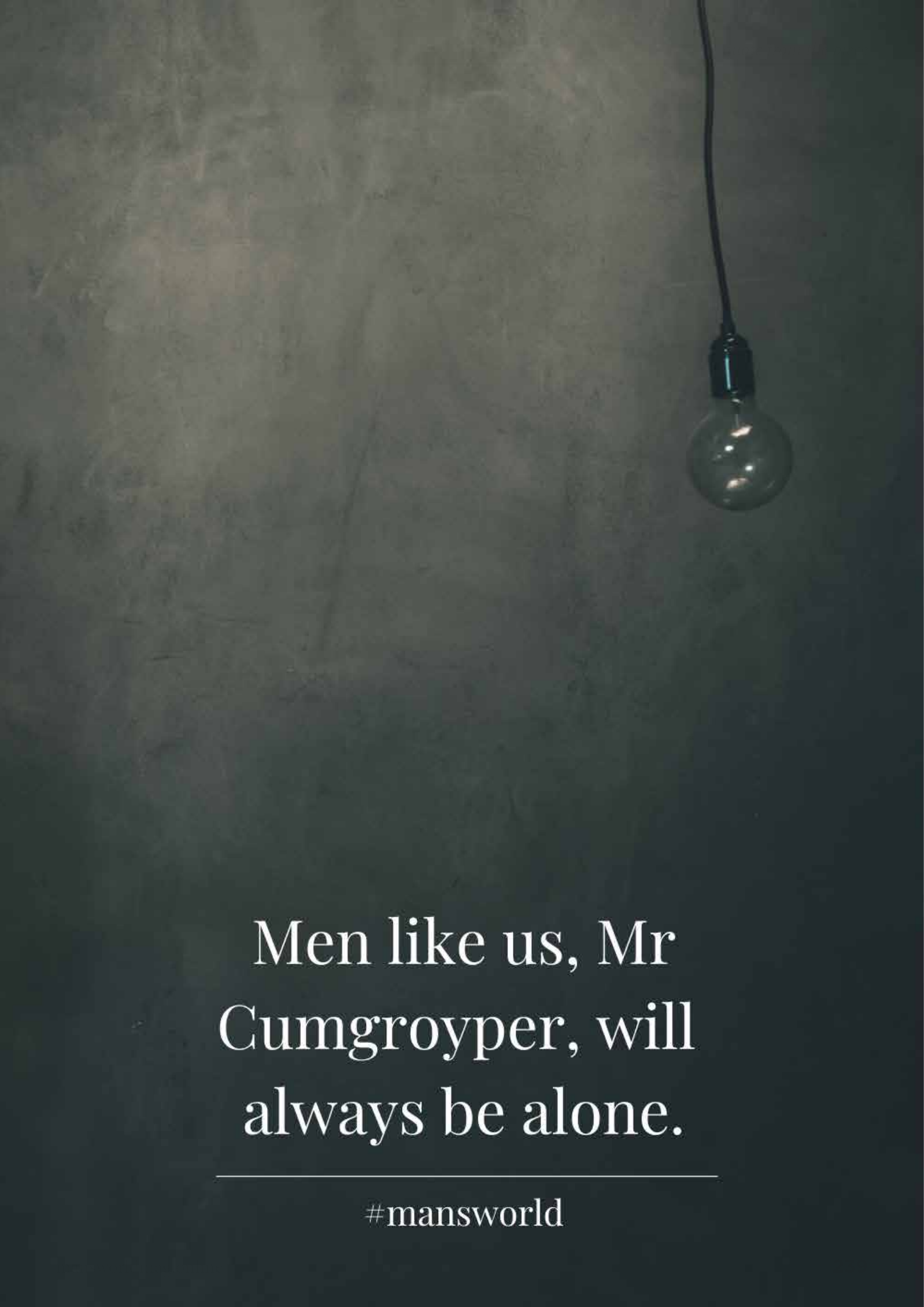
Just then the butler entered the room.

"There's a trunk-call from London, Sir Walter. It's Mr 'Eath, and he wants to speak to you personally."

My host went off to the telephone.

He returned in five minutes with a whitish face. "I apologize to the shade of Scudder," he said. "Karolides was shot dead this evening at a few minutes after seven."

THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS, WITH AN EXCLUSIVE NEW INTRODUCTION FROM THE RAW EGG NATIONALIST, IS AVAILABLE NOW IN PAPERBACK FROM AMAZON. THE SECOND BOOK IN THE SERIES IS JOHN BUCHAN'S THE POWER HOUSE, A THRILLING TALE ABOUT THE REAL RULERS OF THE WORLD. AVAILABLE NOW FROM THE ROGUE SCHOLAR SHOP.


Men like us, Mr
Cumgroyper, will
always be alone.
#mansworld

essaY

“People think they read Conan for the simple escapism, but it’s the opposite: they actually read him for the verisimilitude. Those who haven’t lost the gift of true sight are beginning to understand in their bones what life was like in the Hyborian Age”

Image overleaf: illustration of Conan by Hugh Rankin, from *Weird Tales* 24:4 (1934)

CONAN THE CULTURE WARRIOR

Robert E. Howard's classic stories are anything but shallow fare

by CONAN ESQ. (@conan_esq)

In the century since Robert E. Howard's first published Conan story, the Cimmerian has claimed a thread in the tapestry of western myth, becoming a culture hero alongside Robin Hood or King Arthur. Nobody asks, "Conan!? Who's that?". Everyone knows Conan, even if only by osmosis. Generations have grown up knowing his image and legend; our own noble savage.

Conan entered myth in a number of vehicles: long comic runs, feature films and television programs, video games, action figures, and something like sixty novels by fifteen different authors. But the original stories are surprisingly few. Howard only ever wrote about 360,000 words of Conan tales, including a single novel (*Hour of the Dragon*). That word count is roughly in line with a single book of George Martin's *Song of Ice and*

Fire series. Nevertheless, from only those few stories – many of them only fragmentary – the Cimmerian has achieved persistent popularity and become a byword for barbarism. So much so that Amazon canceled its plans for a live-action Conan series over concerns about the "toxic masculinity" inherent in the stories and characters. Conan is the big man on campus: he presents the same problem for Amazon that he does for the priests of Anu.

Why does Conan punch so far above his apparent weight? Perhaps because our scales aren't calibrated. Conan never really caught the interest of the Academy. Even today, Howard's work is often overlooked by the serious critics attempting to digest other early pulp or weird writers like Lovecraft, Ashton-Smith, Blackwood, and Machen. Many readers fall into the trap of shallow reading, coming to think of Conan as a simple amalgamation of muscles, swords, sorcerers, wenches, and monsters. Those things are very cool, but there's a lot more going on under the hood. After all, the big man is still on campus while post-Howard characters like Thongor, Brak, Imaro, Elak, and Kothar are all forgotten.

Though Howard's Conan stories seem like straightforward pulp fantasy, under the hood there's a robust engine for criticizing the spirit of civilizations, and a vision for resolving the evils that flow from their corruption. Howard is not a fabulist at all. Howard is so grounded, so based in observation and in history, that he becomes prophetic. People think they read Conan for the simple escapism, but it's the opposite: they actually read him for the verisimilitude. Those who haven't lost the gift of true sight are beginning to understand in their bones what life was like in the Hyborian Age.

Imagine yourself in the Hyborian Age. Use your mastery of hypothetical thought. How would you feel if you had been born in Koth or Stygia? Consider the sorcerers, the monsters, and the wenches. Why did Howard choose these images as the texture for his work? Where do they come from? What would it feel like to live in that age?

The Conan stories are always drenched in the perfume of a lurid and sensual mysticism. Life is the *bellum omnium contra omnes* ("war of all against all"). Men curse with the names of gods they may one day have the misfortune to meet. Powerful cults funded by the elite, using the gutter castes as their agents, operate freely throughout Hyborian civilization. Sorcerers and witches employ terrifying, often sexual, practices and rituals to gain power in public and in private, exploiting temple maidens and virgin sacrifices and summoning monsters. Some will have already intuited my argument, but I will pull the lines apart to read between them.

The cult motif is very consistent in the Hyborian setting. This patchwork of cults within a society of sensual mysticism is where Conan gets a lot of the girls he kisses, slaps, spanks, throws over his shoulder, etc. In *The Black Colossus* the sorcerer Natohk seeks to exploit Princess Yasmela, promising her a profane union in the service of power. In *The Slithering Shadow*, Thalis of Stygia tries to sacrifice Conan's girl Natala to the Chthonic god of the ancient city. *In The Devil In Iron*, the captive Nemedian highborn girl Octavia is first a piece of bait for Conan, then promised a fate worse than death by the necromancer Khosatral Khel. Each is an example of the erotic mystery cult's influence on life in Hyboria.

A beautiful woman does not end up on a sacrificial altar by accident. It takes organizational and institutional clout. You have to be a heavy hitter to waste virgins like Thulsa Doom. You need people giving money, building citadels, scouting victims, providing food, selling their swords, etc. A lot of people are involved and invested in the dark rituals of this civilization. And these practices don't just vanish without effort either. They permeate the culture and become difficult to excise. Empires like Carthage and Tenochtitlan crumbled under the curse of similar practices rather than give them up. Most of the Hyborian kingdoms and peoples live amid this grim chaos. In one sense, this influence of cults and erotic mysticism comes to define the pre-Christian Hyborian Age.

What Howard knew is that they also define our age. Look at the world we live in through Conan's eyes. How would he view the patterns and events we see every day?

The Dilators and Autogynephiles are the most obvious: ritual eunuchs and catamites in service to the priests of a certain cult. I know we don't see such things specifically in Howard's work, but an attentive reader can spot them between the lines, and assume Howard blurs his lens to spare his audience. He predicts them nevertheless. For example, the Conan stories mention the cult of Derketo several times, most notably in *The*

"Even today, Howard's work is often overlooked by the serious critics attempting to digest other early pulp or weird writers like Lovecraft, Ashton-Smith, Blackwood, and Machen"

Slithering Shadow, where Thalis, barely-clothed, whip in hand, tells us:

"They will put her through paces she never dreamed of! She is too soft to endure what I have thrived on. I am a daughter of Luxur, and before I had known fifteen summers I had been led through the temples of Derketo, the dusky goddess, and had been initiated into the mysteries."

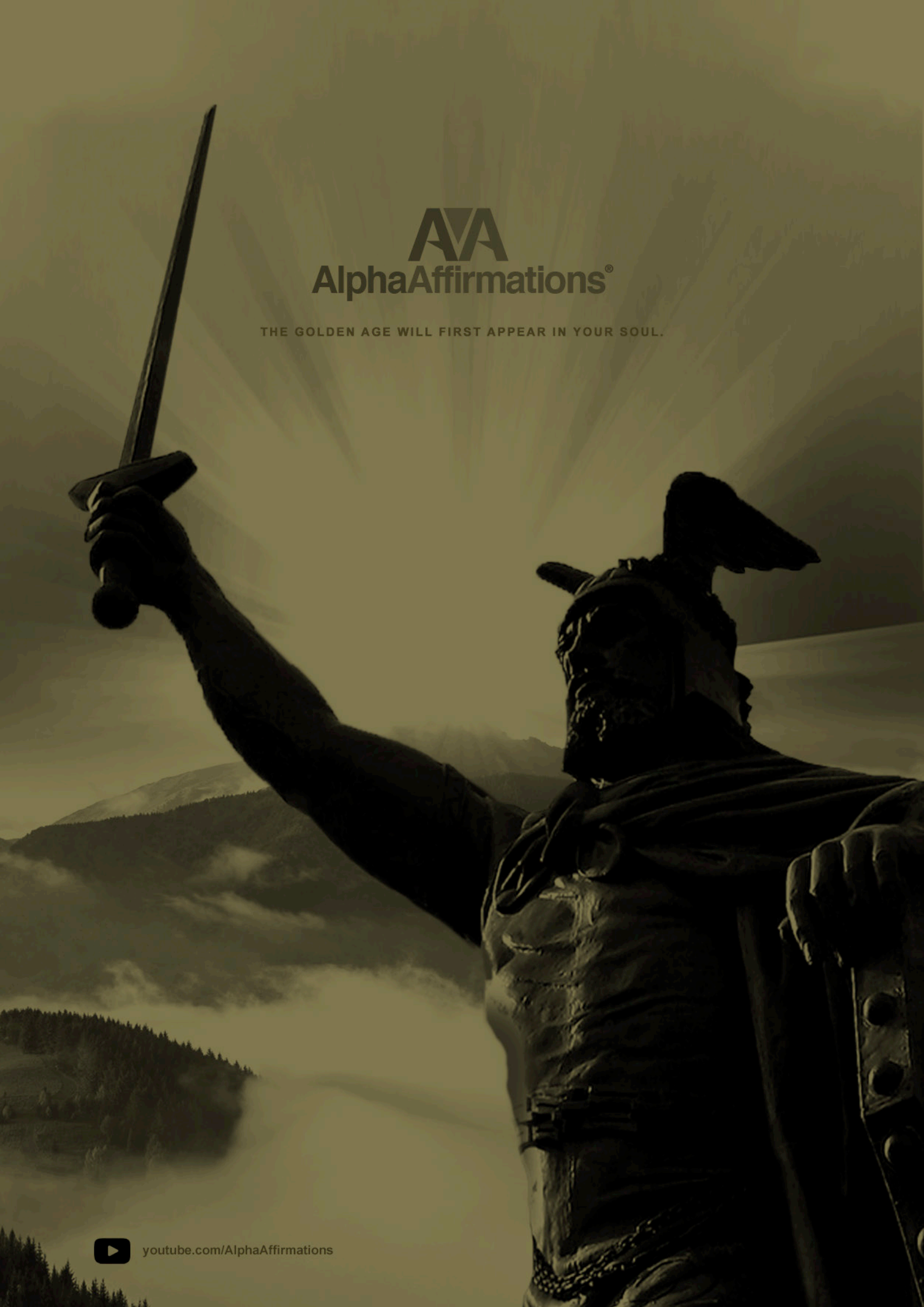
Derketo is not a creation of Howard's. She was a fertility goddess worshiped classically in the Levant as both Derceto and Atargatis. Her priestly practices included rituals wherein young men would castrate themselves and begin living as women at the temple, including performing womens' work and cross-dressing. An early historian tells us:

"In Syria and in Urhâi the men used to castrate themselves in honor of [Atargatis]. But when King Abgar became a believer, he commanded that anyone who emasculated himself should have a hand cut off. And from that day to the present no one in Urhâi emasculates himself anymore".

This, of course, sounds all too familiar to us. When we think in Hyborian terms, the lines between the Hyborian Age and our own begin to blur and the verisimilitude of the Conan stories becomes clear. Consider the cult whose followers practice child sacrifice. Its members are everywhere among the desperate poor, the thoughtless middle, and the avaricious elite. Conversely, among the death cults that draw from those at their lowest point, others focus on the ritualized sacrifice of adults. You can easily imagine a story of Conan rescuing a pretty maid from the death-worshiping cultists of Stygia. So too can you easily imagine me, Conan Esquire, rescuing a pretty MAID from the death-worshiping cultists of Canada. You may hate these disgusting practices, but you can't do much, because the cult is very powerful with so many people involved in it at some level. So life goes on in the diverse and vibrant Zamoran cities of Shadizar and San Francisco.

Other cults worship the primitive monsters and unsettling hybrids that claim their own unavoidable place in the mind of the people, whether the people are victims of savage violence or just hear alarming stories and worry for the safety of their families. These dysgenic breeds lurk in the shadows on the fringes of civilization as the pawns of the avaricious cults, yet loyal only to themselves, just as in *The Jewels of Gwahlur*, where dead sorcerer Bit-Yakin's monstrous servants are described as "hairy, man-like, yet hideously human; but their eyes were alive, cold sparks of gray icy fire." Howard describes one further:

***Sorcerors,* Nicholas Roerich(1905)**
gouache and pastel on cardboard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"[It was] no ape, neither was it a man. It was some shambling horror spawned in the mysterious, nameless jungles of the south, where strange life teemed in the reeking rot without the dominance of man, and drums thundered in temples that had never known the tread of a human foot."

Art, especially important civic sculptural art, links the long ages and spiritual inches between our modern era and ancient Hyboria, forgotten but never dead. In civic art we see the elevation of archaic goddesses without even the pretense of disguise. The statue of a horned and winged goddess in gold, entitled "Witness", now stands triumphantly atop the New York City Courthouse, while a larger copy stands in nearby Madison Square Park. It is impossible to miss the parallels to Istar, whose cult practiced sexual rites with temple prostitutes and whose myth often focused on usurping the realms of other gods. In Howard's work, as in our own age of decaying civilization, Istar appears as Ishtar, largely unchanged in name and aspect. Thus, in *The Black Colossus* we learn:

"The Kothians had long since abandoned the worship of Mitra, forgetting the attributes of the universal Hyborian god . . . Ishtar was much to be feared, and all the gods of Koth. Kothian culture and religion had suffered from a subtle admixture of Shemite and Stygian strains. The simple ways of the Hyborians had become modified to a large extent by the sensual, luxurious, yet despotic habits of the East."

Howard foresaw the depths of our modern state as we began our slide in earnest. He knew, spiritually, the nature of the world that lay just underneath ours, and to which, consequentially and mercifully, we would eventually return. He wrote about it. His decision to set Conan on ancient earth instead of an invented realm is no accident. We are re-entering the Hyborian Age.

But there are silver linings here. Among the most important thematic conflicts the Conan stories consistently set up is that of a lonely glimmer of vitality opposing the broad sweep of a deeply corrupt, effete, moribund world-soul rooted in weak kings, old men, monsters and whores. Conan castigates those so-called elites whose position isn't truly earned, whose spirit is not "nailed to their spines". It venerates instead those rare few who win their thrones by blood and sweat and by Crom, who will not sell. All the while, Conan also sifts the mindless lower castes for hints of honor and vitality, however alien, amid the filth.

This conflict isn't equally clear everywhere all the time. Races rise and fall. The Hyborian Age lasts a long time. Some races do better than others at preserving the divine essence, while everywhere the old wells of nobility run dry and new are being dug. But it's Howard's complete, visceral, spiritual understanding of his thematic conflict that helps give his archetypal arrangements of plot and character such insistent and thrilling relatability. You recognize this world and its people from your blood memories.

Conan gives daring support for both the strictest hierarchies (in merit and in rank) and for an egalitarian acknowledgment that the sea of humanity can at any time heave forth a great vital champion to leave a blood wake behind him. Conan finds friends, enemies, and lovers from every class of society, from kings to slaves. He simply shrugs at the apparent contradiction, and invites the philosophers to concern themselves with the problem, if they wish.

There is electricity in this impossible tension between hierarchy and egalitarianism, between vital power and stagnant power, between the solar and chthonic gods. Together with Howard's focus on the relationship between will and vitality, this lends the stories some of that effervescent quality which lifts the spirit and inflames the soul. We see Conan as a man embodying virtue as a function of his own will and no other's.

Some things get repeated over and over so much nobody stops to ask if they're even right. The idea that Conan is a flat character in some simple pulp fantasy stories is one of these. It is the opposite. Conan may not have character arcs in the sense we expect from modern writing, but he is nevertheless startlingly present and potent. If we say Howardian less often than we say Lovecraftian, it's because the former is too ambitious and captures too much meaning for casual use. And Howard encodes all this into a single character. Conan the Cimmerian implies this entire prophetic warning about the modern state and, conversely, the way a man can conquer it (if not transcend it). He is written as the singular symbol of Howard's great "j'accuse" to encroaching modernity: Conan is judge, jury – and executioner.

And this is a powerful symbol indeed. Despite near-complete disinterest from the so-called keepers of culture, Conan has become a culture hero. He's become Lindy. This is evidence of the potency of Howard's great thesis, and speaks to the serious merit of Howard's work. Conan is overlooked. But that's just how he'd like it.

A podcast for the lost arts, reclaiming the literary Holy Land from the heathen

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AS TOUGH AS A GRIZZLY

essay
by A.J. Bell

I have a tough time watching new movies these days, or new anything really. All I see is the dysfunction, the nihilism, the way mental illness is portrayed as some kind of superpower. It drives me up the wall. I can't take it. I have to shut it off.

Getting a little bit older really does give you a new perspective; you realize how much certain ideas were drilled into your head. Ideas about how the world works, and how you should live your life. You have enough experience now to understand the power of that. You develop an acute awareness of how much you've internalized these things, how much you've acted out those ideas in your life. And you've had a front row seat to the results, some of which you can never take back or change.

For these reasons, many of my old favorites have been downgraded to time capsules from another life, a different time, a different place; or to just plain unwatchable. I don't need to be reminded. I absorbed a lot of bad messages from the culture, when I was younger. I admit it. Hook, line, and sinker. I was a star pupil, I'm sorry to say. And I experienced all the chaos and the heartbreak and the inevitable restraining orders that come from that. (Want to rush into a relationship with an exciting girl you just met? Be careful what you wish for, boys). I had to learn a lot of hard lessons. There's a lot that I regret. But I also realize I deserved better. We all do. How would life be different if we weren't taught the wrong things, on purpose?

Fortunately, we live in a time now where a new generation of storytellers and creative people are getting things back on track. People who reject all that unhealthy junk. People who want to inspire others, to lift them up; to make it new, as well as provide a connection to the past. People who know about bears.

Alone in the vast cinematic wasteland of my youth is the movie *The Bear* (1988), directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud, adapted from the 1916 novel *The Grizzly King* by James Oliver Curwood. The film follows two bears, and the hunters pursuing them, on their adventures through the British Columbia wilderness of 1885. One bear is a newly-orphaned cub, while the other is an adult male, who becomes his mentor.

This is my favorite movie. I watched it as a kid, when it came out. The movie poster is burned into my brain. It stirs up all kinds of memories from my childhood. I remember seeing it on the wall at the local video store in the nineties, along with *Hellraiser* and *The Crow*. I can still vividly recall first watching the climactic scene: the confrontation on a cliff between the adult bear and Tom, one of the hunters. I remember being a little boy, and my heart pounding.

Time passes. I become an edgy teenager (till about age twenty-two, let's be real here). I chainsmoke and have cool hair. I forget about Tom and the bears. The aforementioned character-building takes place. Slowly, painfully so. I manage to start thinking before I do things. I get into politics, and books that get banned off Amazon.

Then a couple years ago I watched *The Bear* for the first time, as an adult. I randomly found it in a bargain bin, and a wave of nostalgia hit me. So I bought it. I was admittedly a little hesitant. Af-

"Our understanding of our own instincts is distorted, and that keeps us tethered, just out of reach of all the things that could make us whole"

ter all, I was revisiting a piece of media from my childhood. From the before time. I knew there was a very real chance all my fond memories were about to be nuked from orbit. (Recently I rewatched *The Monster Squad*, which I'd enjoyed as a young person too. The movie doesn't hold up. Also, I'd completely forgotten about the eccentric "German" neighbor character who turns out to be a holocaust survivor. Because monsters really do exist, kiddos).

Anyway, my fears were unfounded. The movie is terrific. It has beautiful scenery and music. (It was filmed in Italy and Austria. I have no idea how well it passes for Canada, but it looks great). The score by Phillipe Sarde is mainly used to punctuate the more dramatic moments, and does an excellent job of this, as well as accenting the grandness and mystery of the setting. The rest of the time you simply have the sounds of the forest: birds singing, running water, the wind. We follow the little bear cub as he explores his surroundings and tumbles around, pawing at frogs and tortoises, and emulating his much-larger companion.

To be honest, there's not a whole lot to the film. And I think that's one of its strengths. Not a whole lot happens. There's very little dialogue. After all, of the five characters, two are bears. The three human actors (Tchéky Karyo, Jack Wallace, and Andre Lacombe, respectively) are good in their roles. But they take a backseat to the critters, and the mountains and the trees, and the sky.

A couple things completely flew over my head back when I was a kid. First, the little guy eats some mushrooms he finds, and he goes on a little trip. Second, at one point the big guy meets a foxy girl bear. And the call of the wild takes hold… I don't know what I thought of this, as a kid. But I know I didn't get it.

Much of the film is lighthearted. But it does have an important message, I think. The hunter Tom (Tchéky Karyo) makes a critical decision at the end of the story. On the surface, maybe it seems simple. An easy choice. But it transforms him. You could say he truly becomes a man at that moment. I would say he becomes a hero. And I'm being deliberately vague because I want you to go watch it. I think you'll like it.

We live in a world where we're constantly told that feeling better is the same as being better. That being perceived as an honest person of integrity, online and elsewhere, is the same as truly embodying those virtues. And as a result, we're all messed up. We don't know how to be better. Our understanding of our own instincts is distorted, and that keeps us tethered, just out of reach of all the things that could make us whole.

After revisiting the film as a man in my thirties, it's become somewhat of an obsession. I read the book. I built up a nice collection of other Curwood novels. I rewatch it, I show it to friends. (Text me your address. I'm coming over with the DVD). I think about the story a lot, it has a strange hold on me. It seems to cut through all the noise, as if saying: This is what it's all about. This is what it means to be alive.

Michigan native James Oliver Curwood (1878-1927) was a great writer of adventure novels in the vein of Jack London, and a very popular one during his lifetime. Although the success of *The Bear* did rekindle some interest in his work, he is mostly forgotten now. Which is a shame, because he wrote in a simple but poetic style that makes his stories just as gripping today as they were a century ago. I encourage you all to check out his work, especially if you're seeking refuge from the current state of things.

The Bear is a family-friendly film, in a lot of ways. But there is some violence. Some animals are injured, and killed. So if you have very young children, you might want to wait a year or two.

We all need to be strong and tough in this life. But sometimes you need to be as tough as a grizzly. This movie can help show you how.

Blowjobs? Only if you're a gnostic.

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History

DUELLING: HOW THE ARISTOS SETTLED THEIR ACCOUNTS

history

by ANTHONY BAVARIA

Imagine it: You just shot someone directly through the heart with a pistol. The police arrive to the sight of you standing over the lifeless corpse of your opponent, gun still smoking in hand. Handcuffs are opened, but your bros — as well as those of your opponent — intervene; they tell the cops that the shooting was a mutually-agreed upon battle… everyone shrugs their shoulders (except the dead guy, of course) and goes home.

For obvious reasons, the act of dueling in modern times is hard to fathom. The weapons, ideals, and aesthetics of the honorable men that engaged in this behavior simply do not exist anymore. Many would say that the disappearance of potentially deadly single combat is a good thing, and largely it is, for the spilling of blood over differences considered unsubstantial by today's standards seems a waste; but more than just the loss of life has been prevented.

Dueling is a centuries-old practice of settling a dispute with another man. It's an overwhelmingly Western phenomenon and was usually fought with swords. For this reason, as well as several others, the art of dueling was practiced mostly by the aristocracy. Only men of high birth were typically trained in man-on-man swordsmanship or fencing, as opposed to the unit-cohesion-oriented tactics of lay foot soldiers. Furthermore, a life of wealth afforded the ability to attain precision-made blades as well as the extensive training and time required to master them; this same concept applies to the knights and jousters of the medieval era.

Another aspect that made dueling so aristocratic was the fact that there were so many rules to follow. After an infringement was made, the offended would challenge the wrongdoer to a duel; I have no idea how popular glove-slapping ever was, but you get the idea. The summons was made so the affronted party could retain his honor, and the challenged usually needed to accept to keep his as well. To prevent outrageous claims culminating in the needless loss of life, the duelists would select "seconds", who were generally close friends or acquaintances. The seconds would meet and discuss the nature of the offense, if it even warranted dueling in the first place, and if so, set parameters. Rather than outright calling off the pending confrontation, if seconds determined the misdeed was less than deadly, it was often customary to establish rules for the duel in a way that made the loss of life highly unlikely. With edged weapons, this could mean simply drawing blood (think of the knife fight in Rebel Without a Cause); in the age of pistols, shots would occur at far distances. The duelists voluntarily exposing themselves to danger allowed them to save face against their opponent. By the 18th Century, most of these guidelines were codified in the Irish Code Duello, a document standardizing the rules and regulations of dueling.

None of these points are made to suggest that anyone of social stature below the rank of nobility didn't duel, because they most certainly did; but their methods were considered to be cruder. In fact, one of the great equalizers of dueling was the usage of pistols. Writing on American frontier life in the 19th Century, Bil Gilbert has much to say on the introduction of hand-held firearms in his biography on Joseph Walker, Westering Man. Gilbert describes the necessity of a strong, burly build for pioneers trailblazing the North American continent. In addition to expected reasons like being able to carry lots of equipment, a large frame also came into good use when fighting men, whether they be savages or other frontiersmen. The pistol negated this requirement for success on the frontier. Any thin-framed weakling could make his way in the wild, so long as he knew how to shoot. Gilbert states,

"In an earlier time it was unusual for a man to bother carrying a handgun principally because the models available were slow to load, inaccurate and inclined to misfire. They were mostly favored by formal duelists, but this was more of an interest of eastern gentlemen and their imitators than of western frontiersmen. The latter were just as hot-tempered and violently inclined, but their combats tended to be hand-to-hand ones in which, as one commentator reported, 'The acme of accomplishment was to throw one's antagonist down and, catching the fingers under the jaw or in the hair, use this fulcrum to gouge the eyeball out onto the cheek with the thumb. If this could not be done, the fighter tried to bite off a nose or an ear.'"

He goes on to say,

"When it came into civilian use after the Civil War, the six-shooter was in a sense a democratic innovation since it offered homicidal opportunities to almost anyone would could afford or steal a gun and had the desire to become expert with it… carpetbaggers and psychopaths of the temper of Billy the Kid became killers and terrorists as they could not and would not have been if they had to grapple with their victims."

These sentiments gave rise to the gun-slinging, quick-draw killers of Western lore; all, to say the least, quite different from the "eastern gentlemen"

Clockwise from top: a duel in Regency England; Andrew Jackson, 7th president of the USA; detail from a flintlock duelling pistol

referenced by Gilbert, following their rules and retaining their honor. This is the era most think of when considering duels — 19th Century men in top hats and frock coats, standing back-to-back, walking ten paces, turning, flamboyantly aiming their pistols, and firing.

There are many famous examples: 7th President of the United States Andrew Jackson killed a man in a duel — Jackson was also shot in the chest — and was rumored to have fought several more. Founding Father Alexander Hamilton was notoriously gunned down by his political rival, Vice President Aaron Burr. Some of the best instances are found in the officer's corps of the U.S. military. The heightened sensibilities of the Victorian era were so outrageous that between the War of 1812 and the American Civil War, more naval officers died of dueling than combat or occupational dangers at sea.

One of the most principled cases can be found between U.S. Navy Captain Oliver Hazard Perry and Marine Corps Captain John Heath, whom Perry publicly slapped in the face over the latter's alleged incompetence in command during the

Critical race theory?

Hell, that just sounds like common sense and good manners to me.

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"Though great men cut down in their prime by dueling is sad and, in most cases, unnecessary, something else has been lost since the practice's abolishment"

Second Barbary Coast War. Though Perry had to accept Heath's eventual challenge to retain his honor, he had no intention of firing on a man he deemed unworthy to die; Perry wrote and signed a refusal to fire a shot in anger at Heath, sealed it, and handed it to his second, fellow naval officer Stephen Decatur. Perry attended the duel, took the field, walked his paces, turned, and stood defiantly motionless as Heath fired. Luckily, the ball missed. All present waited for Perry to shoot, who instead holstered his weapon; Decatur approached Heath, handed him the letter and asked if his honor had been satisfied. Though the Code Duello forbade "dumb firing" (wasting a shot to intentionally avoid killing a foe) and referred to it as "children's play," Perry's premeditated refusal to shoot a man he considered respectable enough to live (but still slap-worthy) while still subjecting his body to death brought manly honor to an entirely new level.

Though Stephen Decatur's name is barely known today, if you look closely, you'll notice high schools, roadways, and parks named in his honor. He was the youngest man to reach the rank of Captain in the American Navy, doing so at twenty-five years of age after leading a boarding party against a captured ship during the First Barbary Coast War, an act that Lord Horatio Nelson referred to as "the most bold and daring act of the Age." Decatur achieved further glory when he married the Mayor of Norfolk, Virginia's daughter, a woman of such beauty she was once courted by the very same man that killed Hamilton as well as Napoleon's brother; she rejected them both but capitulated to the woos of the daring man of the high seas. During the War of 1812, Decatur skippered the USS United States and raked the HMS Macedonian in the naval version of a duel; he actually took her as a prize, sailing triumphantly back to the Eastern Seaboard.

This amazing career was juxtaposed with the lackluster ones of Commodores James Barron and William Bainbridge. Both men lost ships under embarrassing circumstances; Barron's was during the Chesapeake–Leopard affair without firing a single cannon and Bainbridge relinquished the USS Philadelphia to North African pirates, this was the very same ship Decatur raided while Bainbridge sat out the conflict in a Barbary prison. Both men had an axe to grind with Decatur, a man many saw as a future President of the country. Barron eventually worked up the courage to challenge Decatur to a duel and the young Captain made the poor decision of choosing Bainbridge as his second, who allegedly, out of career jealousy, set the parameters of the encounter to make death likely. Both men were injured and Decatur ultimately succumbed to his wound.

Though great men cut down in their prime by dueling is sad and, in most cases, unnecessary, something else has been lost since the practice's abolishment. The disappearance of dueling directly coincides with the erasure of a true aristocracy throughout the West. Writing on the demise of aristocracies and the rise of meritocracies and their pseudo-war on high culture, Helen Andrews states,

"Unlike meritocracies, aristocracies can put actual content into their curricula—not just academically, but morally. Every aristocracy has an ethos, and a good ethos will balance out the moral faults to which that aristocracy is prone. The upper-class WASPs who constituted "the Establishment" in twentieth-century America were very rich, so they instilled in their children a Puritan asceticism. The Whig grandees of eighteenth-century Britain, who were the opposite of ascetic, cultivated a spirit of usefulness to check their tendency toward idleness."

In Notes on the Death of Culture, Mario Vargas Llosa echoes this sentiment when he juxtaposes the notion of contemporary specialists to,

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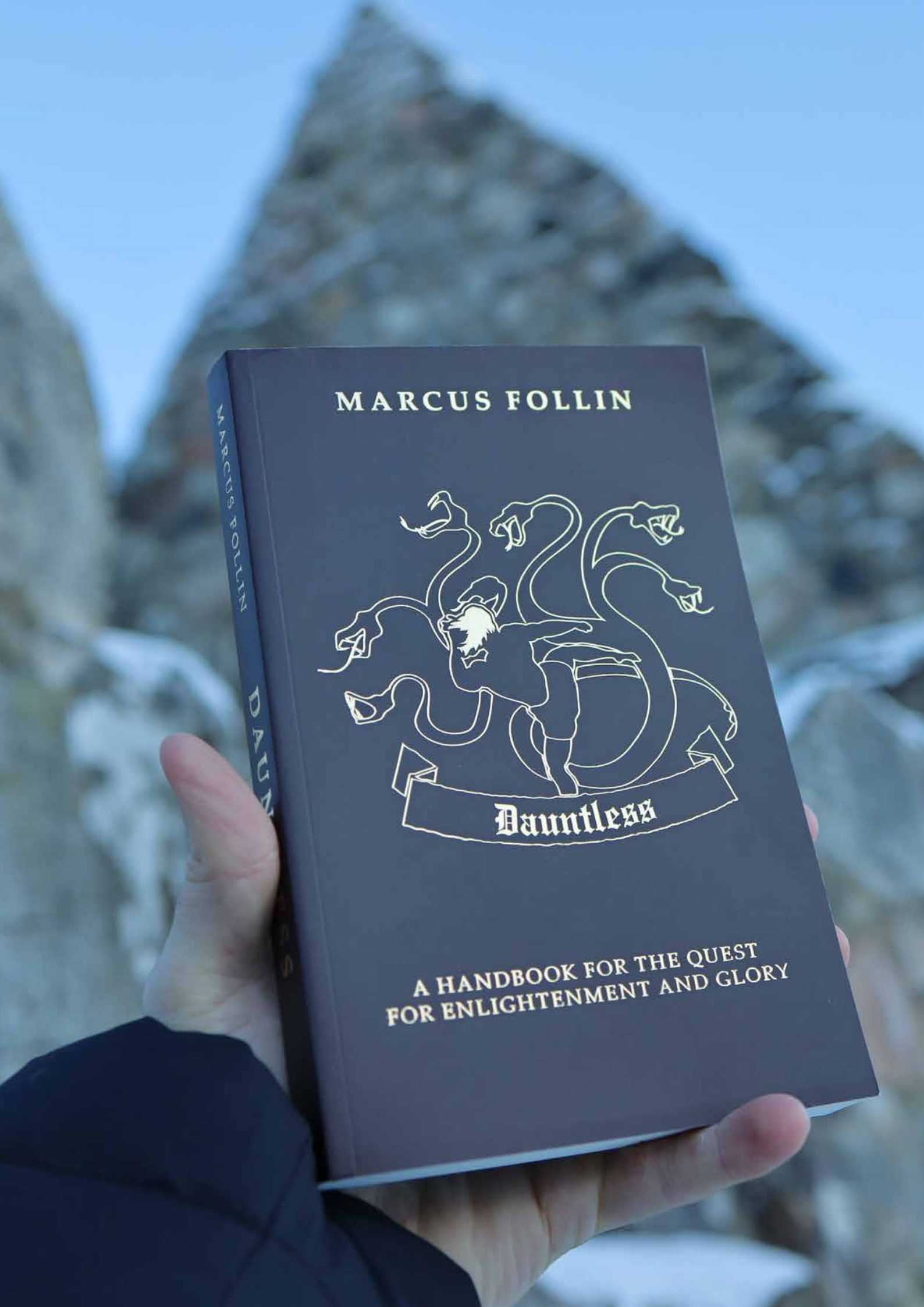
MARCUS FOLLIN
Dauntless
A HANDBOOK FOR THE QUEST
FOR ENLIGHTENMENT AND GLORY

"the elites, the cultured minorities who, as well as building bridges across the different areas of knowledge — science, literature, the arts and technology — also had a moral influence, be it religious or secular." Though, on the surface, these points seem to have nothing to do with killing someone over a disagreement, we can take the current lack of moral, aristocratic guidelines and examine the detriments of their absence in martial action.

Imagine the reservation a doctor would have in casually prescribing hormone blockers to a pre-teen if there were the threat of a father challenging pistols as a result and widespread shame if the challenge were not accepted. Would politicians so brazenly advocate for suicidal policy if there was a crazy-eyed, Andrew Jackson-esque figure in the opposing wing, eagerly waiting to plant a musket ball in their chest? Our deranged ruling class can get away with murder because mutually-agreed upon attempts at murder have been outlawed.

Today, this responsibility has exclusively been delegated to the state. Only governmental authority can decide who lives and who dies. Research has been able to corroborate this. In "Going postal: State capacity and violent dispute resolution," authors Jeffrey Jensen and Adam Ramey correlated decreasing rates of dueling and laws prohibiting the act with an increase in institutional state presence, specifically by examining the spread of post offices. They state,

"Given the duel's prevalence as a method of dispute resolution, its decline over the 19th century could reflect either a decrease in the number of disputes or in the propensity to use violence. The rapid rise of civil litigation in American courts over the 19th and 20th Centuries, respectively, suggests that a secular decline in disputes cannot explain the eventual disappearance of dueling. Another possibility is that the cultural changes caused social norms regarding the importance of honor to diminish. The presence of a culture of honor, however, could certainly be endogenous to a society's institutional quality."

Bottom line, the more power the state holds, the less likely it is for men to settle disputes in an organized and honorable-yet-dangerous way. Furthermore, increases in state power seem to have less of an effect on diffusing unorganized, chaotic violence—an all-too-common occurrence in name-your-apocalyptic American urban center with police forces that rival the standing armies of small nations. Robbery-driven murder, senseless beatings, "drive-bys," and sucker-punches are now the default type of manly encounter as opposed to two men striding onto a battlefield in adherence to a code of honor. Jensen and Ramey exemplify this point when, referencing 19th Century dueling statistics, they state,

"(T)he expansion of state capacity is strongly associated with a substantial reduction in the rate of dueling. For Southern states with few post offices, the dueling rate is about 2 per 100,000 residents; for non-Southern states, it is just over 0.5. As state capacity increases, the gap between the two shrinks to near zero. The differences are even starker when comparing new and old states. New states with low state capacity have a recorded decade dueling rate nearly equivalent to the contemporary homicide rate in New York City (my emphasis)."

Ironically, there seem to have been more risk takers when the stakes were so much higher and the likelihood of getting challenged or killed by a peer was more prevalent. This is partially because in such ruthless-yet-moral times, the fearless were at the forefront of society, actively moving the needle of civilization; as opposed to today, where the bug-man is in control since there's no real fear of someone challenging you to a duel or, at a minimum, beating the shit out of you. Instead of leading from the front, as a true aristocracy once did, our contemporary meritocratic-managerial despots lead from the sidelines, sequestered from danger in their gated cul-de-sacs and shielded from their policy that wreaks havoc on have-nots.

Today, the people running the West have become experts at exporting violence to lower classes as well as throughout the globe. Whether it's an Appalachian bumpkin shooting teenage towelheads in the Middle East or inner-city Magic Americans murdering each other as well as innocent bystanders in unprecedented numbers, it's all a byproduct of oligarchical policy that put these people in violent situations or places they should have never been in the first place. If only our oligarchs could be challenged to a field at dawn; if only.

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I'm a fool

The classic equestrian short story by SHERWOOD ANDERSON, which William Faulkner called the "finest short story in the English language", beside Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

It was a hard jolt for me, one of the most bitterest I ever had to face. And it all came about through my own foolishness too. Even yet sometimes, when I think of it, I want to cry or swear or kick myself. Perhaps, even now, after all this time, there will be a kind of satisfaction in making myself look cheap by telling of it.

It began at three o'clock one October afternoon as I sat in the grandstand at the fall trotting and pacing meet at Sandusky, Ohio.

To tell the truth, I felt a little foolish that I should be sitting in the grandstand at all. During the summer before I had left my home town with Harry Whitehead and, with a n----- named Burt, had taken a job as swipe with one of the two horses Harry was campaigning through the fall race meets that year. Mother cried and my sister Mildred, who wanted to get a job as a school teacher in our town that fall, stormed and scolded about the house all during the week before I left. They both thought it something disgraceful that one of our family should take a place as a swipe with race horses. I've an idea Mildred thought my taking the place would stand in the way of her getting the job she'd been working so long for.

But after all I had to work, and there was no other work to be got. A big lumbering fellow of nineteen couldn't just hang around the house and I had got too big to mow people's lawns and sell newspapers. Little chaps who could get next to people's sympathies by their sizes were always getting jobs away from me. There was one fellow who kept saying to everyone who wanted a lawn mowed or a cistern cleaned, that he was saving money to work his way through college, and I used to lay awake nights thinking up ways to injure him without being found out. I kept thinking of wagons running over him and bricks falling on his head as he walked along the street. But never mind him.

I got the place with Harry and I liked Burt fine. We got along splendid together. He was a big n------ with a lazy sprawling body and soft, kind eyes, and when it came to a fight he could hit like Jack Johnson. He had Bucephalus, a big black pacing stallion that could do 2.09 or 2.10, if he had to, and I had a little gelding named Doctor Fritz that never lost a race all fall when Harry wanted him to win.

We set out from home late in July in a box car with the two horses and after that, until late November, we kept moving along to the race meets and the fairs. It was a peachy time for me, I'll say that. Sometimes now I think that boys who are raised regular in houses, and never have a fine n------ like Burt for best friend, and go to high schools and college, and never steal anything, or get drunk a little, or learn to swear from fellows who know how, or come walking up in front of a grandstand in their shirt sleeves and with dirty horsey pants on when the races are going on and the grandstand is full of people all dressed up — what's the use of talking about it? Such fellows don't know nothing at all. They've never had no opportunity.

But I did. Burt taught me how to rub down a horse and put the bandages on after a race and steam a horse out and a lot of valuable things for any man to know. He could wrap a bandage on a horse's leg so smooth that if it had been the same color you would think it was his skin, and I guess he'd have been a big driver, too, and got to the top like Murphy and Walter Cox and the others if he hadn't been black.

Gee whizz, it was fun. You got to a county seat town, maybe say on a Saturday or Sunday, and the fair began the next Tuesday and lasted until Friday afternoon. Doctor Fritz would be, say, in the 2. 25 trot on Tuesday afternoon and on Thursday afternoon Bucephalus would knock 'em cold in the "free-for-all" pace. It left you a lot of time to hang around and listen to horse talk, and see Burt knock some yap cold that got too gay, and you'd find out about horses and men and pick up a lot of stuff you could use all the rest of your life, if you had some sense and salted down what you heard and felt and saw.

And then at the end of the week when the race meet was over, and Harry had run home to tend up to his livery-stable business, you and Burt hitched the two horses to carts and drove slow and steady across country to the place for the next

"First of all I went downtown and walked about with the dudes. I've always thought to myself, 'Put up a good front' and so I did it"

meeting, so as to not overheat the horses, etc. , etc. , you know.

Gee whizz, gosh amighty, the nice hickorynut and beechnut and oaks and other kinds of trees along the roads, all brown and red, and the good smells, and Burt singing a song that was called "Deep River," and the country girls at the windows of houses and everything. You can stick your colleges up your nose for all me. I guess I know where I got my education.

Why, one of those little burgs of towns you come to on the way, say now on a Saturday afternoon, and Burt says, "Let's lay up here." And you did.

And you took the horses to a livery stable and fed them, and you got your good clothes out of a box and put them on.

And the town was full of farmers gaping, because they could see you were racehorse people, and the kids maybe never see a n----- before and was afraid and run away when the two of us walked down their main street.

And that was before prohibition and all that foolishness, and so you went into a saloon, the two of you, and all the yaps come and stood around, and there was always someone pretended he was horsey and knew things and spoke up and began asking questions, and all you did was to lie and lie all you could about what horses you had, and I said I owned them, and then some fellow said "Will you have a drink of whiskey" and Burt knocked his eye out the way he could say, offhand like, "Oh well, all right, I'm agreeable to a little nip. I'll split a quart with you." Gee whizz.

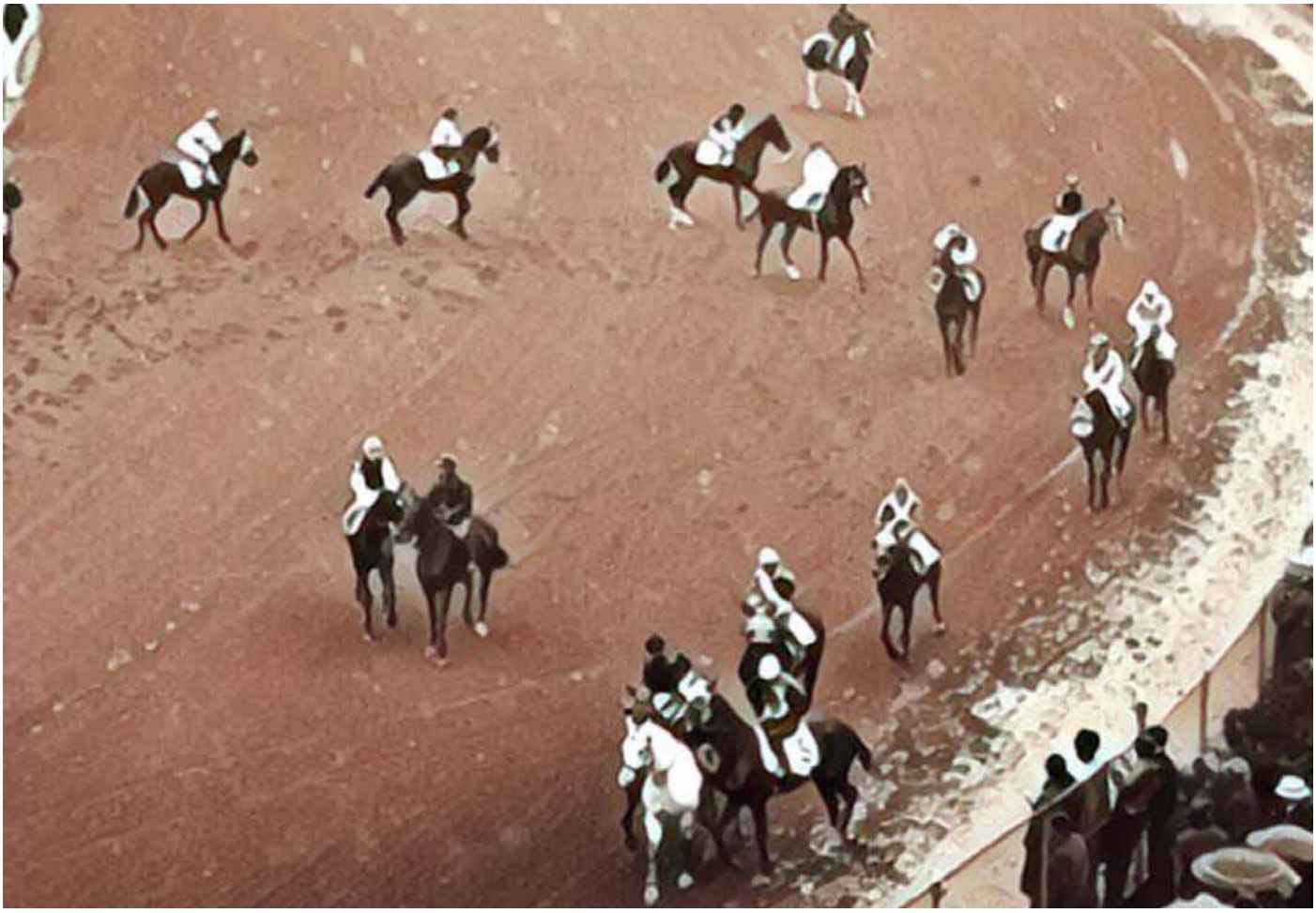
But that isn't what I want to tell my story about. We got home late in November and I promised mother I'd quit the race horses for good. There's a lot of things you've got to promise a mother because she don't know any better.

And so, there not being any work in our town any more than when I left there to go to the races, I went off to Sandusky and got a pretty good place taking care of horses for a man who owned a teaming and delivery and storage and coal and real-estate business there. It was a pretty good place with good eats, and a day off each week, and sleeping on a cot in a big barn, and mostly just shovelling in hay and oats to a lot of big good-enough skates of horses, that couldn't have trotted a race with a toad. I wasn't dissatisfied and I could send money home.

And then, as I started to tell you, the fall races come to Sandusky and I got the day off and I went. I left the job at noon and had on my good clothes and my new brown derby hat, I'd just bought the Saturday before, and a stand-up collar.

First of all I went downtown and walked about with the dudes. I've always thought to myself, "Put up a good front" and so I did it. I had forty dollars in my pocket and so I went into the West House, a big hotel, and walked up to the cigar stand. "Give me three twenty-five cent cigars," I said. There was a lot of horsemen and strangers and dressed-up people from other towns standing around in the lobby and in the bar, and I mingled amongst them. In the bar there was a fellow with a cane and a Windsor tie on, that it made me sick to look at him. I like a man to be a man and dressed up, but not to go put on that kind of airs. So I pushed him aside, kind of rough, and had me a drink of whiskey. And then he looked at me, as though he thought maybe he'd get gay, but he changed his mind and didn't say anything. And then I had another whiskey, just to show him something, and went out and had a hack out to the races, all to myself, and when I got there I bought myself the best seat I could get up in the grand stand, but didn't go in for any of these boxes. That's putting on too many airs.

And so there I was, sitting up in the grand stand as gay as you please and looking down on the swipes coming out with their horses, and with their dirty horsy pants on and the horse blankets swung over their shoulders, same as I had been



doing all the year before. I liked one thing about the same as the other, sitting up there and feeling grand and being down there and looking up at the yaps and feeling grander and more important too.

One thing's about as good as another, if you take it just right. I've often said that.

Well, right in front of me, in the grandstand that day, there was a fellow with a couple of girls and they was about my age. The young fellow was a nice guy, all right. He was the kind maybe that goes to college and then comes to be a lawyer or maybe a newspaper editor or something like that, but he wasn't stuck on himself. There are some of that kind are all right and he was one of the ones.

He had his sister with him and another girl and the sister looked around over his shoulder, accidental at first, not intending to start anything — she wasn't that kind — and her eyes and mine happened to meet.

You know how it is. Gee, she was a peach! She had on a soft dress, kind of a blue stuff and it looked carelessly made, but was well sewed and made and everything. I knew that much. I blushed when she looked right at me and so did she. She was the nicest girl I've ever seen in my life. She wasn't stuck on herself and she could talk proper grammar without being like a school teacher or something like that. What I mean is, she was O. K. I think maybe her father was well-to-do, but not rich to make her chesty because she was his daughter, as some are. Maybe he owned a drug store or a drygoods store in their home town, or something like that. She never told me and I never asked.

My own people are all O. K. too, when you come to that. My grandfather was Welsh and over in the old country, in Wales he was — but never mind that.

The first heat of the first race come off and the young fellow setting there with the two girls left them and went down to make a bet. I knew what he was up to, but he didn't talk big and noisy and let everyone around know he was a sport as some do. He wasn't that kind. Well, he come back and I heard him tell the two girls what horse he'd bet on, and when the heat was trotted they all half got to their feet and acted in the excited, sweaty way people do when they've got money down on a race, and the horse they bet on is up there pretty close at the end, and they think maybe he'll come on with

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a rush, but he never does because he hasn't got the old juice in him, come right down to it.

And then, pretty soon, the horses came out for the 2.18 pace and there was a horse in it I knew. He was a horse Bob French had in his string but Bob didn't own him. He was a horse owned by a Mr. Mathers down at Marietta, Ohio.

This Mr. Mathers had a lot of money and owned some coal mines or something and he had a swell place out in the country, and he was stuck on race horses, but was a Presbyterian or something, and I think more than likely his wife was one too, maybe a stiffer one than himself. So he never raced his horses hisself, and the story round the Ohio race tracks was that when one of his horses got ready to go to the races he turned him over to Bob French and pretended to his wife he was sold.

So Bob had the horses and he did pretty much as he pleased and you can't blame Bob, at least, I never did. Sometimes he was out to win and sometimes he wasn't. I never cared much about that when I was swiping a horse. What I did want to know was that my horse had the speed and could go out in front if you wanted him to.

And, as I'm telling you, there was Bob in this race with one of Mr. Mathers' horses, was named About Ben Ahem or something like that, and was fast as a streak. He was a gelding and had a mark of 2.21, but could step in .08 or .09.

Because when Burt and I were out, as I've told you, the year before, there was a n----- Burt knew, worked for Mr. Mathers, and we went out there one day when we didn't have no race on at the Marietta Fair and our boss Harry was gone home.

And so everyone was gone to the fair but just this one n----- and he took us all through Mr. Mathers' swell house and he and Burt tapped a bottle of wine Mr. Mathers had hid in his bedroom, back in a closet, without his wife knowing, and he showed us this Ahem horse. Burt was always stuck on being a driver but didn't have much chance to get to the top, being a n-----, and he and the other n----- gulped that whole bottle of wine and Burt got a little lit up.

So the n----- let Burt take this About Ben Ahem and step him a mile in a track Mr. Mathers had all to himself, right there on the farm. And Mr. Mathers had one child, a daughter, kinda sick and not very good looking, and she came home and we had to hustle and get About Ben Ahem stuck back in the barn.

I'm only telling you to get everything straight. At Sandusky, that afternoon I was at the fair, this young fellow with the two girls was fussed, being with the girls and losing his bet. You know how a fellow is that way. One of them was his girl and the other his sister. I had figured that out.

"Gee whizz," I says to myself, "I'm going to give him the dope."

He was mighty nice when I touched him on the shoulder. He and the girls were nice to me right from the start and clear to the end. I'm not blaming them.

And so he leaned back and I give him the dope on About Ben Ahem. "Don't bet a cent on this first heat because he'll go like an oxen hitched to a plow, but when the first heat is over go right down and lay on your pile." That's what I told him.

Well, I never saw a fellow treat any one sweller. There was a fat man sitting beside the little girl, that had looked at me twice by this time, and I at her, and both blushing, and what did he do but have the nerve to turn and ask the fat man to get up and change places with me so I could set with his crowd.

Gee whizz, craps amighty. There I was. What a chump I was to go and get gay up there in the West House bar, and just because that dude was standing there with a cane and that kind of a necktie on, to go and get all balled up and drink that whiskey, just to show off.

Of course she would know, me setting right beside her and letting her smell of my breath. I could have kicked myself right down out of that grand stand and all around that race track and made a faster record than most of the skates of horses they had there that year.

Because that girl wasn't any mutt of a girl. What wouldn't I have give right then for a stick of chewing gum to chew, or a lozenger, or some liquorice, or most anything. I was glad I had those twenty-five cent cigars in my pocket and right away I give that fellow one and lit one myself. Then that fat man got up and we changed places and there I was, plunked right down beside her.

They introduced themselves and the fellow's best girl he had with him was named Miss Elinor Woodbury, and her father was a manufacturer of barrels from a place called Tiffin, Ohio. And the fellow himself was named Wilbur Wessen and his sister was Miss Lucy Wessen.

I suppose it was their having such swell names

that got me off my trolley. A fellow, just because he has been a swipe with a race horse and works taking care of horses for a man in the teaming, delivery, and storage business, isn't any better or worse than anyone else. I've often thought that, and said it too.

But you know how a fellow is. There's something in that kind of nice clothes, and the kind of nice eyes she had, and the way she had looked at me, awhile before, over her brother's shoulder, and me looking back at her, and both of us blushing.

I couldn't show her up for a boob, could I?

I made a fool of myself, that's what I did. I said my name was Walter Mathers from Marietta, Ohio, and then I told all three of them the smashingest lie you ever heard. What I said was that my father owned the horse About Ben Ahem and that he had let him out to this Bob French for racing purposes, because our family was proud and had never gone into racing that way, in our own name, I mean, and Miss Lucy Wessen's eyes were shining, and I went the whole hog.

I told about our place down at Marietta, and about the big stables and the grand brick house we had on a hill, up above the Ohio River, but I knew enough not to do it in no bragging way. What I did was to start things and then let them drag the rest out of me. I acted just as reluctant to tell as I could. Our family hasn't got any barrel factory, and since I've known us, we've always been pretty poor, but not asking anything of anyone at that, and my grandfather, over in Wales — but never mind that.

We sat there talking like we had known each other for years and years, and I went and told them that my father had been expecting maybe this Bob French wasn't on the square, and had sent me up to Sandusky on the sly to find out what I could.

And I bluffed it through I had found out all about the 2.18 pace, in which About Ben Ahem was to start.

I said he would lose the first heat by pacing like a lame cow and then he would come back and skin 'em alive after that. And to back up what I said I took thirty dollars out of my pocket and handed it to Mr. Wilbur Wessen and asked him, would he mind, after the first heat, to go down and place it on About Ben Ahem for whatever odds he could get. What I said was that I didn't want Bob French to see me and none of the swipes.

Sure enough the first heat come off and About Ben Ahem went off his stride up the back stretch and looked like a wooden horse or a sick one and come in to be last. Then this Wilbur Wessen went down to the betting place under the grand stand and there I was with the two girls, and when that Miss Woodbury was looking the other way once, Lucy Wessen kinda, with her shoulder you know, kinda touched me. Not just tucking down, I don't mean. You know how a woman can do. They get close, but not getting gay either. You know what they do. Gee whizz.

And then they give me a jolt. What they had done, when I didn't know, was to get together, and they had decided Wilbur Wessen would bet fifty dollars, and the two girls had gone and put in ten dollars each, of their own money, too. I was sick then, but I was sicker later.

About the gelding, About Ben Ahem, and their winning their money, I wasn't worried a lot about that. It came out O. K. Ahem stepped the next three heats like a bushel of spoiled eggs going to market before they could be found out, and Wilbur Wessen had got nine to two for the money. There was something else eating at me.

Because Wilbur come back after he had bet the money, and after that he spent most of his time talking to that Miss Woodbury, and Lucy Wessen and I was left alone together like on a desert island. Gee, if I'd only been on the square or if there had been any way of getting myself on the square. There ain't any Walter Mathers, like I said to her and them, and there hasn't ever been one, but if there was, I bet I'd go to Marietta, Ohio, and shoot him tomorrow.

There I was, big boob that I am. Pretty soon the race was over, and Wilbur had gone down and collected our money, and we had a hack downtown, and he stood us a swell supper at the West House, and a bottle of champagne beside.

And I was with that girl and she wasn't saying much, and I wasn't saying much either. One thing I know. She wasn't stuck on me because of the lie about my father being rich and all that. There's a way you know … Craps amighty. There's a kind of girl you see just once in your life, and if you don't get busy and make hay, then you're gone for good and all, and might as well go jump off a bridge. They give you a look from inside of them somewhere, and it ain't no vamping, and what it means is — you want that girl to be your wife, and you want nice things around her like flowers and swell clothes, and you want her to have the kids you're

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going to have, and you want good music played and no ragtime. Gee whizz.

There's a place over near Sandusky, across a kind of bay, and it's called Cedar Point. And after we had supper we went over to it in a launch, all by ourselves. Wilbur and Miss Lucy and that Miss Woodbury had to catch a ten o'clock train back to Tiffin, Ohio, because, when you're out with girls like that, you can't get careless and miss any trains and stay out all night, like you can with some kinds of Janes.

And Wilbur blowed himself to the launch and it cost him fifteen cold plunks, but I wouldn't never have knew if I hadn't listened. He wasn't no tin horn kind of a sport.

Over at the Cedar Point place, we didn't stay around where there was a gang of common kind of cattle at all.

There was big dance halls and dining places for yaps, and there was a beach you could walk along and get where it was dark, and we went there.

She didn't talk hardly at all and neither did I, and I was thinking how glad I was my mother was all right, and always made us kids learn to eat with a fork at the table, and not swill soup, and not be noisy and rough like a gang you see around a race track that way.

Then Wilbur and his girl went away up the beach and Lucy and I sat down in a dark place, where there was some roots of old trees the water had washed up, and after that the time, till we had to go back in the launch and they had to catch their trains, wasn't nothing at all. It went like winking your eye.

Here's how it was. The place we were setting in was dark, like I said, and there was the roots from that old stump sticking up like arms, and there was a watery smell, and the night was like — as if you could put your hand out and feel it — so warm and soft and dark and sweet like an orange.

I most cried and I most swore and I most jumped up and danced, I was so mad and happy and sad.

When Wilbur come back from being alone with his girl, and she saw him coming, Lucy she says, "We got to go to the train now," and she was most crying too, but she never knew nothing I knew, and she couldn't be so all busted up. And then, before Wilbur and Miss Woodbury got up to where we was, she put her face up and kissed me quick and put her head up against me and she was all quivering and — gee whizz.

Sometimes I hope I have cancer and die. I guess you know what I mean. We went in the launch across the bay to the train like that, and it was dark, too. She whispered and said it was like she and I could get out of the boat and walk on the water, and it sounded foolish, but I knew what she meant.

And then quick we were right at the depot, and there was a big gang of yaps, the kind that goes to the fairs, and crowded and milling around like cattle, and how could I tell her? "It won't be long because you'll write and I'll write to you." That's all she said.

I got a chance like a hay barn afire. A swell chance I got.

And maybe she would write me, down at Marietta that way, and the letter would come back, and stamped on the front of it by the U. S. A. "there ain't any such guy," or something like that, whatever they stamp on a letter that way.

And me trying to pass myself off for a big-bug and a swell — to her, as decent a little body as God ever made. Craps amighty — a swell chance I got!

And then the train come in, and she got on it, and Wilbur Wessen, he come and shook hands with me, and that Miss Woodbury was nice too and bowed to me, and I at her, and the train went and I busted out and cried like a kid.

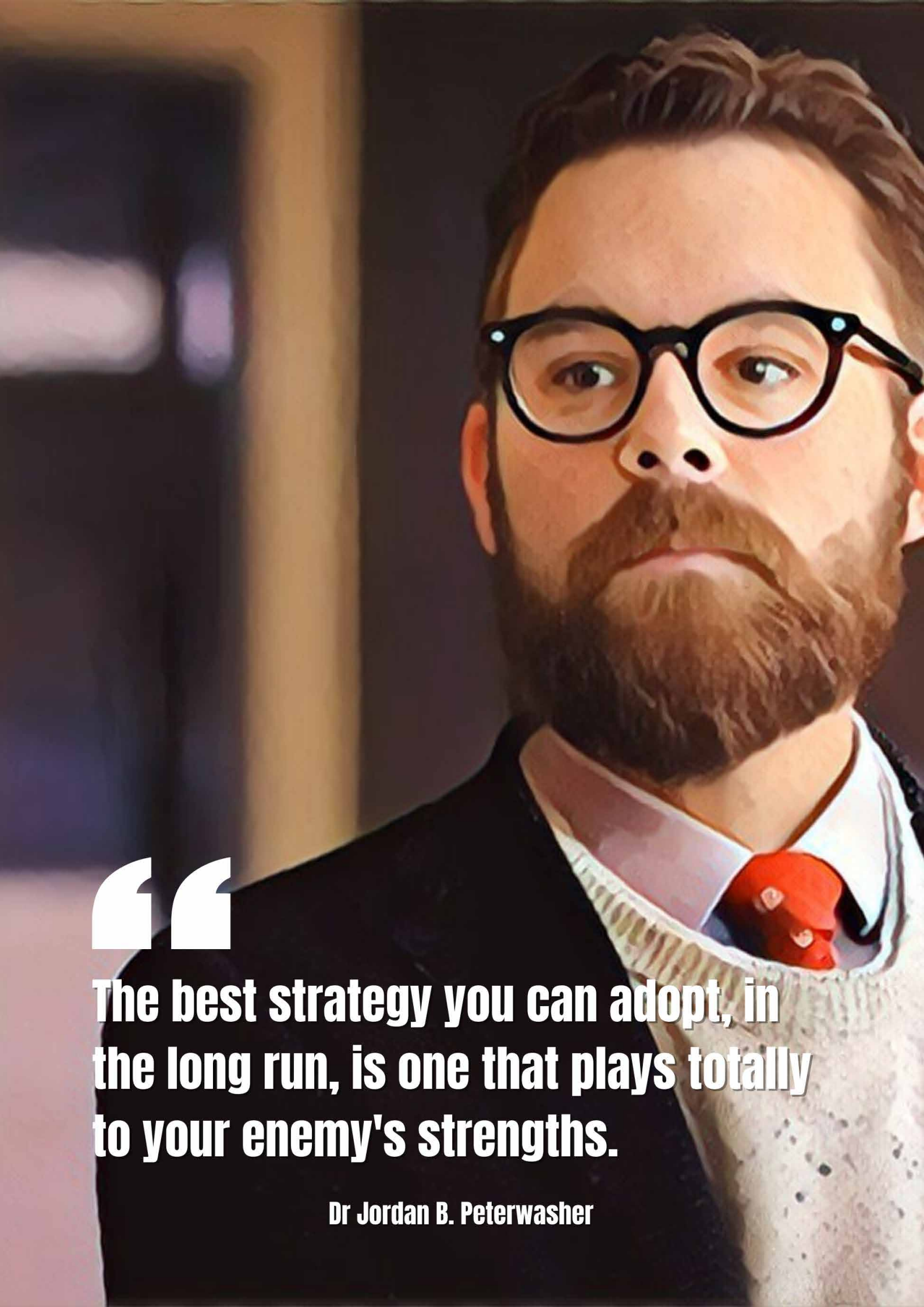
Gee, I could have run after that train and made Dan Patch look like a freight train after a wreck but, socks amighty, what was the use? Did you ever see such a fool?

I'll bet you what — if I had an arm broke right now or a train had run over my foot — I wouldn't go to no doctor at all. I'd go set down and let her hurt and hurt — that's what I'd do.

I'll bet you what — if I hadn't a drunk that booze I'd a never been such a boob as to go tell such a lie — that couldn't never be made straight to a lady like her.

I wish I had that fellow right here that had on a Windsor tie and carried a cane. I'd smash him for fair. Gosh darn his eyes. He's a big fool — that's what he is.

And if I'm not another you just go find me one and I'll quit working and be a bum and give him my job. I don't care nothing for working, and earning money, and saving it for no such boob as myself.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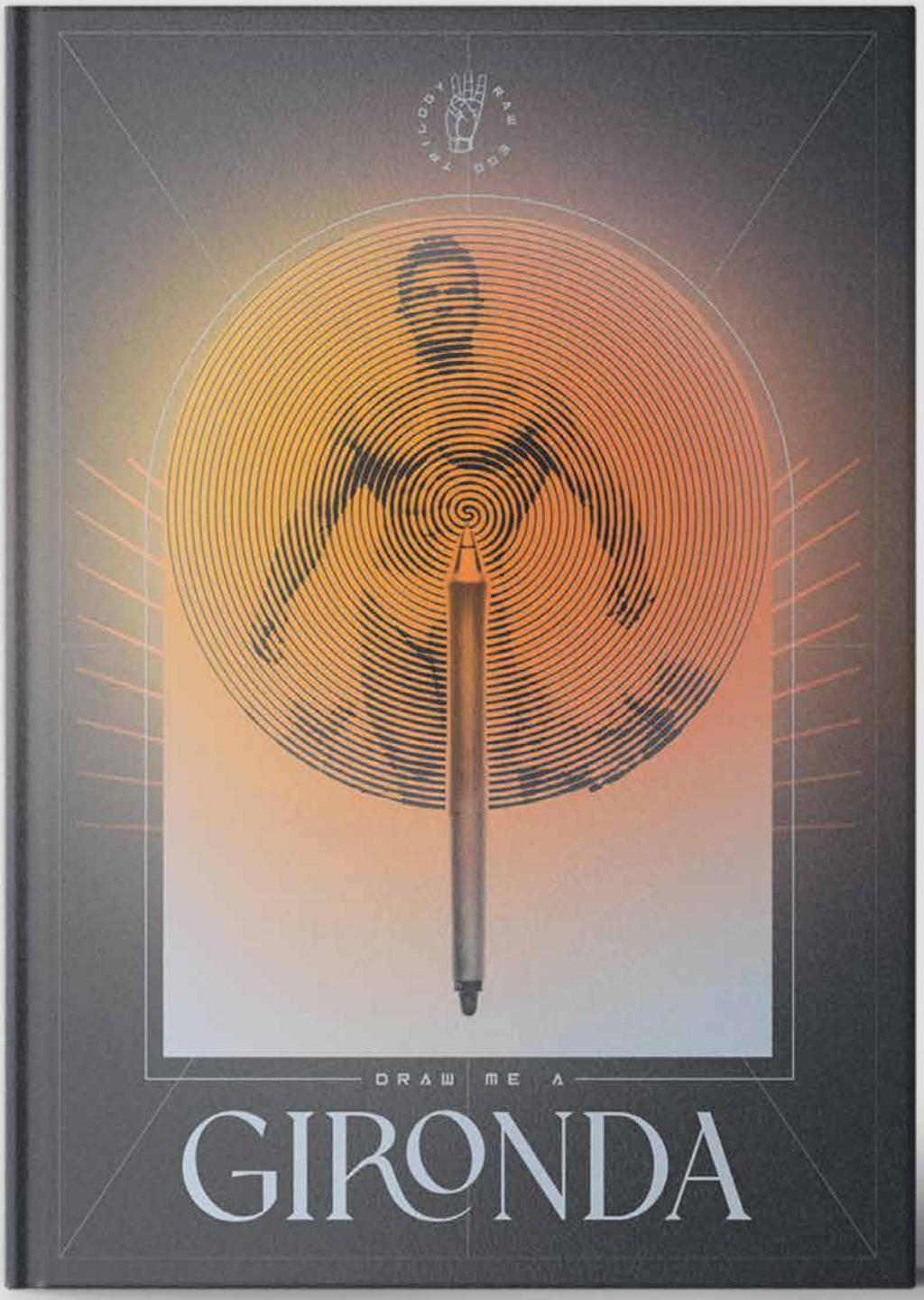
Lifter Nationalism, also known as Liftocracy, is a political theory which proposes that the individuals who can lift the most weight shall be promoted to positions of authority. Support for liftocracy has roots in ancient China and ancient Greece (no doubt influenced by the secret order of INTJ Lifters…) but has arguably peaked in the 2020s. Under Liftocracy, the strongest lifter sits as the head of government, with the next-strongest lifters serving as ministers and priests. While economic policies would no doubt be austere, all youth would be guaranteed the fundamental right to a public gym within walking distance of their homes. Elections would be replaced by weightlifting competitions, and all government buildings would be converted into powerlifting gyms.

No country in the world practices Liftocracy, although grassroots efforts are currently underway in Australia. Online proponents of Liftocracy include Instagram meme accounts @dark_iron_gains, @diamond.doges, @deadlift.inside, @8pl8s, and @schizo_lifter2.5.

This is an excerpt from the Countere series on esoteric nationalisms, available at countere.com

EGGS



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THE EARLY DAYS OF HIV/AIDS

The initial reaction of the medical establishment

by Niccolo Soldo

THIS IS AN EXCLUSIVE EXTRACT FROM A LONGER ESSAY AND SERIES AVAILABLE ON NICCOLO'S SUBSTACK

A little over a decade ago, I was knee-deep in genealogical research and came across data that introduced me to the fact that a plague had hit my side of the county of my birth during the last three years of the Napoleonic Era. One branch of my ancestry saw three generations of direct ancestors, both male and female, almost entirely obliterated over the course of that short time span. The village in which I lived the first part of my life was so devastated that it never managed to recover its

population level even into the late 20th century. My paternal line was at that time across the valley (where the plague was somewhat more forgiving), allowing one of my direct paternal ancestors to make the move after the coast was clear, as a lot of farmland was freed up for survivors to take over and make their own.

When you take a look at the histories of cities in the ancient, medieval, or more recent periods, one will often see how plagues would empty out cities, slashing their populations by a third or half, or even more, requiring immigrants from the hinterland to bring it back to life. This would happen time and time again, if the cities weren't totally abandoned, as many were. Add to this poor medical practices and a brutally high rate of infant mortality, and it's little wonder why Europe's population remained static for long periods of time.

The great advances in medical knowledge and practices in the 19th century paired up with the increasing insistence on better personal and public hygiene to make outbreaks much less frequent than they once were. Still, outbreaks of disease continued to pop up, with the Spanish Flu of 1918 being a particularly costly one, causing 50 million deaths (one of my great-grandfathers among them, the "rich" one!) out of 500 million estimated cases worldwide. Despite that catastrophe, plagues and mass disease were becoming something that increasingly healthy and affluent westerners assigned to the "rest of the world".

Nevertheless, several polio epidemics shook the USA from 1948-1955, reminding Americans that they were never totally safe. Then Dr. Jonas Salk rode to the rescue with his vaccine to save the day. Modern medicine was a miracle, and was something that could be trusted, provided that you had access to it. Penicillin was the best example of this medical revolution.

It was penicillin that gay men (and those treating them) relied on during the 1970s as STDs exploded in number. Cheap to produce, safe to use, and very effective, this medicinal magic lulled not just gay men into a sense of security, but also a notable chunk of the medical establishment as well. Deadly epidemics were fading into collective memory, with the Legionnaires' disease outbreak in Philadelphia in 1976 being an outlier. Modern medicine was a marvel, and it could tackle more and more challenges that were once guaranteed death sentences.

Some medical practitioners and researchers were worried by the late 1970s with what they were seeing in sexually active gay men: increasing rates of both traditional and rare STDs spreading through their communities, alongside exotic diseases that should have neither been present in young men, or should have been particularly easy to fend off (or a combination of both). Epidemiologists, infectious disease specialists, and doctors catering to gay male clienteles expressed their concerns either privately among colleagues, or increasingly loudly with their patients and at conferences.

Doctors began to note young gay men coming down with Kaposi's Sarcoma and Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia (PCP). The former was a cancer found previously only in males of Mediterranean descent and well into old age, while the latter was something that young, healthy people would easily flush out by way of a normal-functioning immune system. The fact that numbers were rising for both and were entirely found within a very specific cohort (young gay men), led many doctors, nurses, and researchers to note these anomalies and to begin asking around to see if these were one-offs, or if others had seen these strange trends happening in their parts of the USA as well.

It's at this point that we will begin to dig into the sources to see just what doctors, nurses, and researchers thought and said upon being introduced to the notion that a new plague was spreading, and how they reacted to it as well. Some were better positioned to react due to their close relations with the gay community, either personally or professionally (and in some cases, both), while others had to do a lot of fast learning in order to understand just how different it was from the straight world.

This entry is going to be quote-heavy for the simple reason that first person accounts are high value, and that interviews and primary sources from which these excerpts are sourced from come from a time in which people could be much more frank and direct than they are today. "Clap doctors", family physicians, specialists and nurses at hospitals, researchers, public health officials, and the CDC will all be represented in order to cast as wide a net as possible to illustrate just how these medical professionals reacted to a new and deadly disease that was both unknown and very menacing.

The Initial Medical Reaction

The BC/AD for the AIDS pandemic in North America is June 5, 1981, when Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR, a CDC publication) published an article entitled "Pneumocystis Pneumonia—Los Angeles" that described a "rare lung infection among a group of gay men…" in that city. As mentioned previously, others had already noted these odd/exotic diseases striking gay men, but this was the first article on record.

"The report details the cases of five patients—all young and previously healthy gay men, with life threatening pneumocystis pneumonia (PCP), an infection that rarely causes serious illness in healthy adults. Between October 1980 and May 1981, the patients sought care at three Los Angeles area hospitals, presenting with PCP and other, unusual opportunistic infections, like cytomegalovirus (CMV) and candidiasis. One patient had recovered from Hodgkin's lymphoma, a cancer that HIV positive people are at increased risk of developing, a few years prior. The editorial notes suggest that some cellular-immune deficiency was at work, although it was unclear what role PCP or CMV played in the dysfunction of the body's defences.

Despite treatment, two patients had died at the time of publication. The remaining three would perish soon after." (Circulating Now - Historical Collection of the National Library of Medicine - June 5, 1981 - The First Report of AIDS in the U.S., June 3, 2021, Erika Mills)

It was the publication of this article that caused the dam to break, as medical professionals across the country began to call one another on their phones, to report similar cases elsewhere, and to compare and contrast just what it was that they were seeing:

"Within a day or two of Gottlieb's report in the MMWR of June 1981, calls came in from several doctors who believed that they had seen similar cases. Jim Curran and Denis Jurannek flew up to New York City to see Alvin Friedman-

Kien and Linda Laubenstein, both to interview some of the thirty-one men with KS and PCP whom they had on their books, and to get details on others who had already died. They also spoke further with Fred Siegal, an immunologist at Mount Sinai Medical Center, who had seen four gay men with chronic perianal ulcers caused by Herpes simplex, only one of whom was still alive. When they returned to Atlanta, Curran got together with Haverkos to draw up a working case definition — one that was subsequently to be greatly enlarged, but that still forms the basis of the AIDS clinical case definition of today." (Edward Hooper, *The River* (1999), p.59)

Reviewing the pathology logs and setting up a case control study:

"Next, the task force members set about reviewing pathology logs from eighteen major cities. They found that GRID cases were not spread throughout the United States, but seemed to be cropping up almost exclusively in the four centers of New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Atlanta. At this stage, all the cases were in gay men, and it was clearly of paramount importance to discover why this group was — apparently uniquely — vulnerable to the syndrome. It was thus that a few weeks later, sociologist Bill Darrow was requisitioned to join the team....

As soon as he arrived, he drew up the interview form for a case-control study, a twenty-one-page questionnaire designed to establish the main risk factors for GRID. Fortunately, one of the subjects that most intrigues "sex-positive" people is their own sexual activity, and the eight physicians whom Darrow trained in Atlanta during August and September apparently had little difficulty persuading their interviewees to answer the sixty-two subdi-

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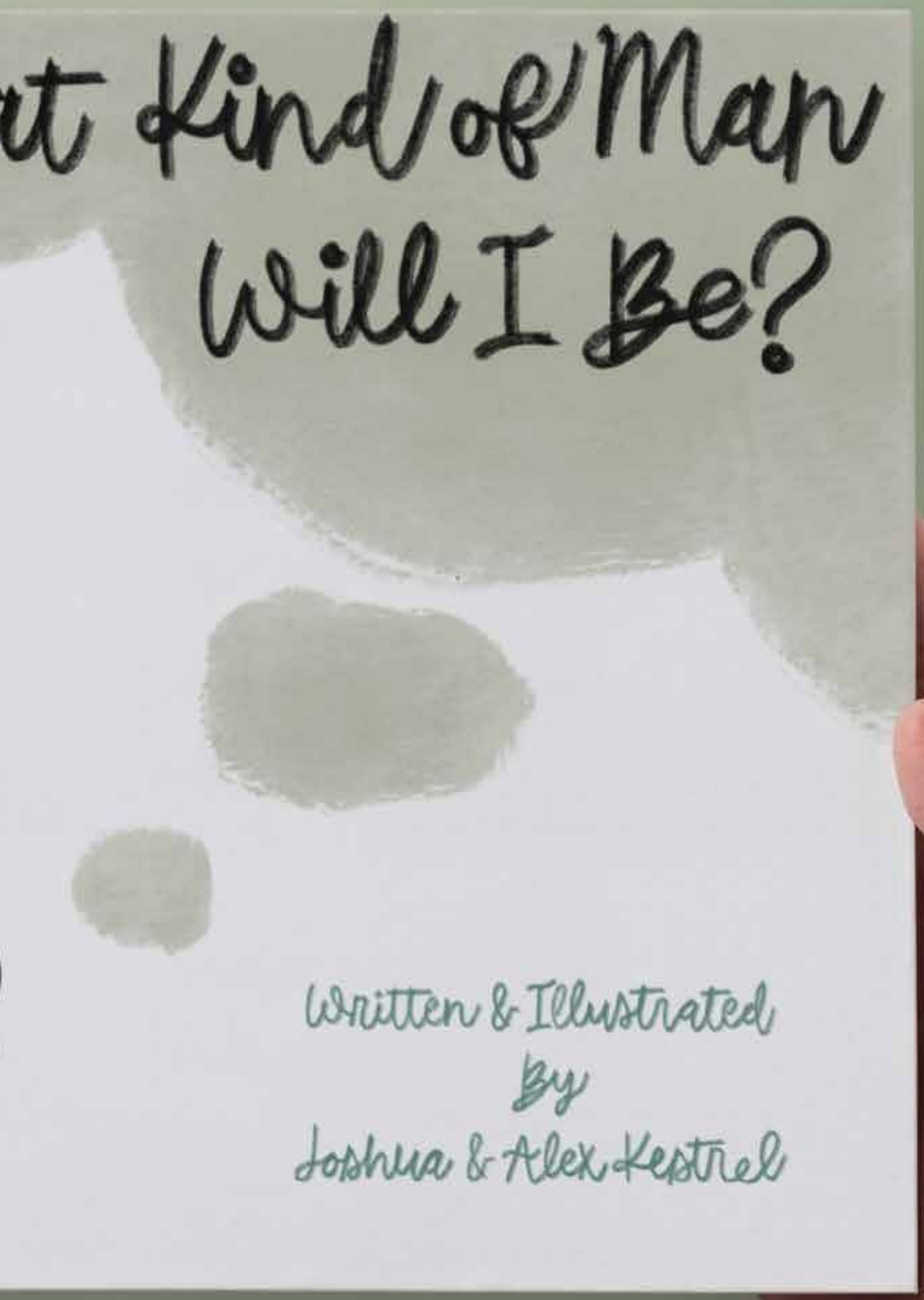
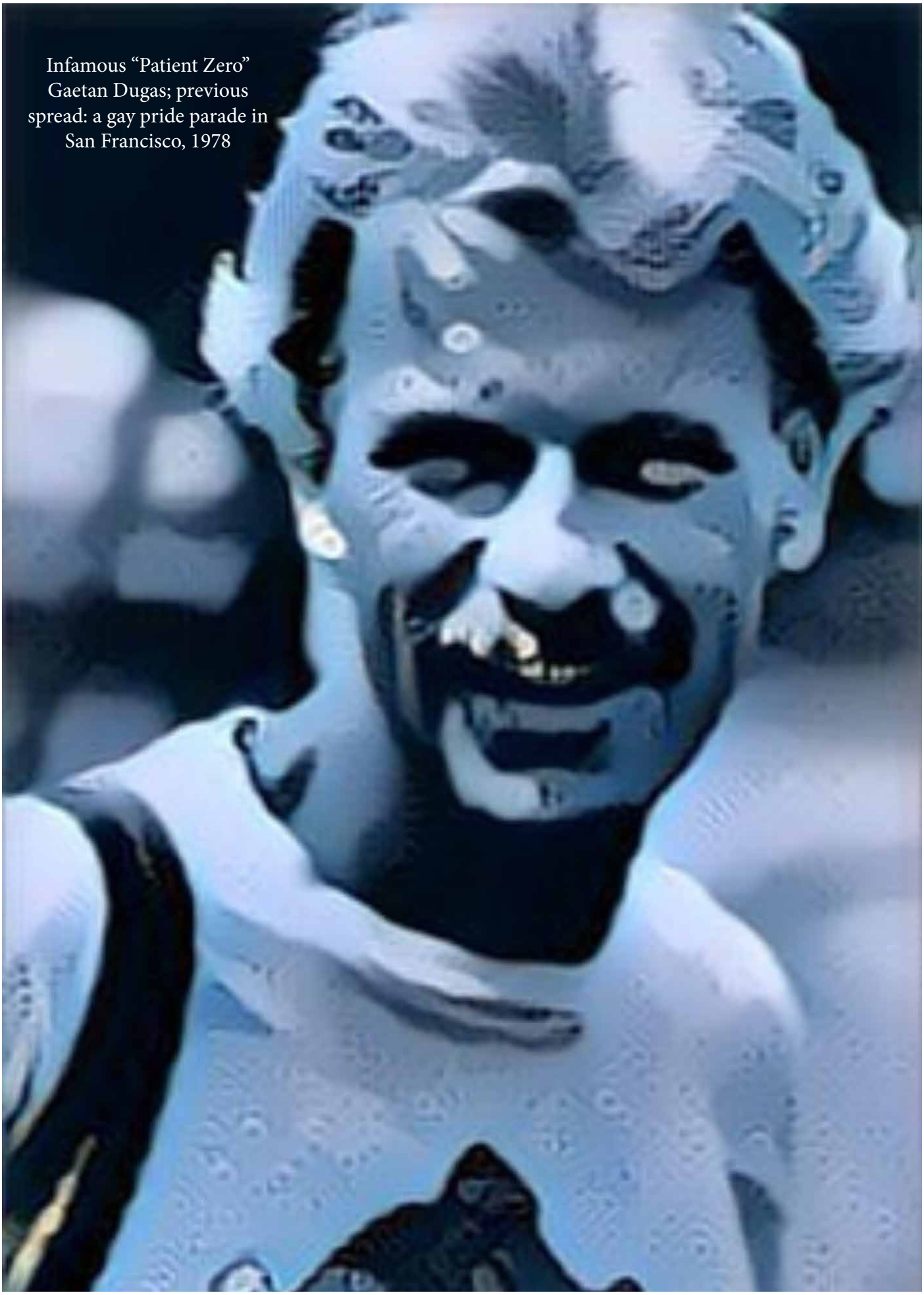
ANTELOPE HILL





Infamous "Patient Zero" Gaetan Dugas; previous spread: a gay pride parade in San Francisco, 1978

vided ques- tions. From September to November 1981, his team interviewed fifty GRID patients, and 120 controls (gay men without symptoms of GRID), from the four key cities. They concluded that the main differences between cases and controls were the number of sexual partners per year and the proportion of those partners met in bathhouses. Also associated with illness were such factors as having a history of sexually transmitted diseases, and exposure to feces — notably during rimming and fisting. The typical GRID patient was an openly gay man in his thirties, who had enjoyed an energetic sex life based around bars and bathhouses for some years, and who used amyl nitrate 'poppers' as a sexual stimulant and relaxant." (Edward Hooper, *The River* (1999), p.60)

The task force members already knew the answer to their question as to what was causing the spread of these diseases, but could not just yet prove it:

"None of these conclusions was unexpected. Indeed, by this stage, most of the task force members were 'willing to bet their salaries' that GRID was caused by a new — or hitherto unrecognized — infectious agent. Alvin Friedman-Kien and colleagues at the New York University Medical Center were beginning to identify sexual connections between some of their GRID patients, but nobody thus far had documented or proved such links." (Edward Hooper, *The River* (1999), p.60)

A small cluster of cases in Los Angeles confirmed their suspicions:

"Shortly after this, Dave Auerbach phoned from Los Angeles with a fascinating story to tell. Darrow immediately flew out to join him, and during the next few days they conducted the study that would effectively confirm the theory of causation that most of the task force scientists, and several of the men suffering from GRID, had long intuited.

Darrow and Auerbach's elegant case-cluster study has a fascinating background, which, were it not so tragic, would have all the makings of a Mensa brainteaser. In October 1979, three long-established gay couples shared the same table at a fund-raising dinner in Los Angeles. The following summer, two of the couples attended a small party beside the backyard pool at one of their houses; they also invited a male prostitute, described as 'a $50 trick off Santa Monica Boulevard.' During the evening, each of the five men had sex with each of the others. Soon afterward, some of the men started feeling lethargic and losing weight, and by March 1982, one of the partners from each of the original three couples had died of AIDS. One of the surviving partners was so concerned by the fact that each of the three men had died on the sixth day of the month, resulting in the ominous figure '666,' that he called up Dave Auerbach at the CDC.

Darrow and Auerbach visited this man a few days later. Unimpressed by the Beelzebub theory, they decided that the fact that only two of the deceased had attended the backyard party confirmed that the cause of their deaths was unlikely to be either environmental (like contaminated water in the swimming pool) or circumstantial (a bad lot of drugs). But then the real connections began to emerge. One of the dead men from the pool party (who would later be given the cluster study code LA2), turned out to have had sex with two other men who also had GRID, one of whom was an air steward (LA1), who had traveled widely around the world in the previous six years: in 1976 to Kenya and Tanzania, in 1977 to Italy and Greece, and in 1978 to France and England. 20 Soon afterward it became apparent that one of the other dead men from the pool party, LA3, had also had sex with an air steward who was suffering from KS, and that this man, a Canadian, had himself had sex with three other Los Angelinos with GRID. At long last, there was hard evidence to support the oft- suspected theory of causation. GRID appeared to be caused by an infectious, sexually transmitted agent, most probably a virus." (Edward Hooper, *The River* (1999), pp.60-62)

This led to the CDC's infamous cluster study that gave birth to the legend of Patient Zero…

The rest of the article, and the rest of the series of which it is a part, can be read at niccolo.substack.com. This particular instalment can be read at niccolo.substack.com/p/the-early-days-of-hivaids-1979-1982.

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INTERVIEW

NOOR BIN LADIN
In conversation with
The MAN'S WORLD Interview: LAURENCE EASEMAN

If liberty and sovereignty are core tenets that you cherish and wish to protect, you have come to the right place. And if you want to inform yourself on how to achieve one of the worthiest goals in life – to be free – you will love this next conversation. For those of you who have not come across Laurence Easeman before, I'm delighted to introduce you to this great freedom fighter and share with you some of his wisdom he has gained from life-changing experiences.

Laurence and I were first introduced by REN last year, and we became friends very quickly. It would have been hard not to, as Laurence is the definition of a great lad – courageous, kind, loyal, sharp and fun! In a world of spineless, mediocre or fake characters, Laurence definitely stands out. While the initial purpose of this introduction was for us to have a conversation on Laurence's podcast, EyesWideOpen (which we have yet to do, stay tuned!), REN and I both thought he would be a perfect guest of this column considering Laurence's life path, his extensive knowledge on a variety of topics, and his clear vision about both the predicament we find ourselves in and the way forward.

One of the main focuses of the interview is what Laurence has called "the sovereign mind". We explore key questions that have animated Laurence ever since he was a child: What makes us mental slaves? What does it mean to have agency over our own lives? Where does the authority over us flow from?

After decades of social engineering designed to lead us towards enslavement and utter apathy, it is imperative more and more people ask themselves these fundamental questions, and seek to answer them – for their own sake, and that of humanity. This is the perfect place to start or learn more about how we can break free. Laurence has been standing up against the system for years and has successfully challenged the state on multiple occasions. Read on to find out about more about his valuable cheat codes and how to follow his example in your own life.

NOOR BIN LADIN

Laurence, thank you for having this conversation with me. For those who are finding out about you for the first time, tell us a bit about yourself and what has led you to the pages of MAN'S WORLD in a few words.

Thank you for inviting me to MAN'S WORLD, Noor. It is an honor to be featured in the pages of such an esteemed publication. My name is Laurence, but friends call me Loz. I am originally from Liverpool but currently residing in the beautiful paradise of the Algarve.

How did I end up here? Well, I have been pushing back against the tyranny of the State for a long time now. As a result, I have built up a valuable store of battlefield experience that I can now put to good use helping others. So during the middle of Covid, I decided to start a podcast called EyesWideOpen on YouTube to share my experience and host other culture warriors fighting in the freedom trenches. This led me to discover REN's excellent work. I extended an invitation to him to come on my podcast to review his book *The Eggs Benedict Option*, which he kindly accepted, and we have been friends ever since. And that's how I ended up here, chatting with you, the fabulous Noor Bin Ladin, my other new friend!

Podcasting allows me to indulge two of my favorite things: the creative process of filmmaking (I was a professional filmmaker for over 10 years, since my early 20s) and to share my discoveries of the true nature of our reality, which I've been digging into since 1997. Currently, I produce content three times a week, which includes an interview with a red-pilled culture warrior, a live news stream challenged the Regime's narrative, and an episode of "The Sovereign Mind" in which I share tools and tips for others to break free. One could say I'm a full-time red-piller now, haha!

Your background is fascinating, and it feels like you've lived many lives. One turning point was a video which went viral of you defending the Bird family as they faced unlawful eviction in England. You valiantly stood up against the bankers' henchmen, and succeeded in not only preserving this family's property, but exposing this unlawful, criminal practice by the banks. Tell us more about this experience and how it impacted your life.

In 2013 I published a video called "The People vs. The Banks: Conviction Beats Eviction" where we stopped an unlawful eviction by standing our ground and using the law. It was a massive success which went viral around the world. But it was a huge turning point in my life and came about after years fighting the banks, the police and the bailiffs in the courts and defending other unlawful evictions up and down the country.

The video was successful because it inspired people to challenge the debt enslavement run by the financial elite and the ridiculous henchmen doing their bidding. It was a significant victory because it boosted the morale of everyone watching and those involved. This is important because demoralised people don't fight back.

"Democracy, rather than working in the service of the people, is in fact one of the main tools to enforce dictatorial state power"

The regime spends an enormous amount on constant demoralising propaganda, to convince us that the monstrous machine they have built is impossible to stop, so what's the point in trying? This is the illusion of authority. That's why it was an important video: we drew back the veil to expose that illusion. There have been lots of similar videos that followed, but "The People vs. the Banks" was the first and something I'm really proud to be have been involved with. We made an impact on the culture. However, it made me some powerful envious enemies and as quick as my star ascended I was struck down and sent to the underworld to face my ordeal.

The success of the video brought me to the attention of Russell Brand, who back in 2012 was probably one of the most famous men in the country. As a political activist, he dared to break a big taboo by encouraging people not to vote in the coming election.

Democracy, rather than working in the service of the people, is in fact one of the main tools to enforce dictatorial state power. Democracy is mob rule, and he who controls the mob rules. Therefore, the state needs the mandate of the mob so the mob must vote. Brand was breaking the illusion with his counter-narrative about all of the above. His exhorta-

tion to abstain from voting inspired an attack against Brand from the Left, the Labour Party and Antifa to bring him back under control.

"The People vs. The Banks" hit the culture at the same time Brand was sharing his message. He shared the video and reached out, invited me into his inner circle, interviewed me for his book *Revolution*, and offered me a position working with him. This was a massive development and validation of the work I'd been doing against the Banks.

However, the Left and their terrorist street enforcers Antifa, had other ideas in mind. One of the main threads of my work had been an investigation and subsequent exposure of the banking swindle: how the criminal banks have been destroying the West for the last few hundred years through Usury. Part of this investigation led me into the origins of WW2 and to ask some uncomfortable questions about the role of usury, money creation, and fractional reserve banking.

Naively, I didn't understand back then, you're not allowed to ask such questions without facing the wrath of the mob and at the time, my voice was only amplified to a small audience. But by standing with Brand suddenly these risky questions were cast to a much larger audience. So as a way to silence Brand's anti-democratic message and shut down my take on usury, I became the target of a highly organised smear campaign executed by Antifa and ultimately the national press. I was branded a Neo-Nazi by *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph*, *The Evening Standard*, and a host of publications. This was all too much for Brand, and it caused him to cancel the launch of his book *Revolution*, and then make the fatal error of endorsing David Miliband of the Labour Party for Prime Minister in the election. This came after months of telling people not to vote. Someone got to him. He then disappeared from public view for a couple of years to reinvent himself and that was the last I saw of him.

The effect on my life was equally dramatic. The Neo-Nazi label destroyed my film career and turned me into a pariah in my home city of Liverpool. I'd gone from hero to zero without passing "Go", without collecting $200. However, I was already the veteran of years of frontline battle against the banks, police and bailiffs in the courts, so I wasn't about to accept the heavy attack I had sustained to my reputation. I made the commitment to clear my name and began a campaign for justice. After a two-year struggle, I became part of English legal history forever by winning an action for libel in the High Court, exonerating my name and my reputation.

So, publishing 'The People vs The Banks' set off a chain reaction that changed my life forever but at the same time has now given me the opportunity to talk to you today. It was an incredible and powerful period of my life that turned me into the battle-hardened veteran of the culture war I am today.

You can still see the video online. It's been deleted untold times by YouTube but people just keep reposting it.

"We grant the state a monopoly on violence, in order to keep the peace, but who actually knows how to use the system to enforce their rights?"

You mentioned you have spent the past eight years rebuilding your reputation following the smear campaign waged against you. Part of it no doubt is due to you winning that libel case. Was it an option not to fight back at any point?

Almost nobody ever fights back. The illusion is so fearsome that conceding is the option that almost everybody takes. We grant the state a monopoly on violence, in order to keep the peace, but who actually knows how to use the system to enforce their rights? Do you remember when Trump was on the campaign trail in 2016, when he began the "lying media" rhetoric? Well, he was implying how the media use defamation almost as a weapon to destroy the reputation of dissidents to destroy their ability to earn a living. No income, no voice. During the campaign, Trump claimed that he was going to relax the laws on defamation to make it easy for people to bring libel actions against the lying media, because no one ever challenges them. And for good reason: defamation is a highly technical area of law, it's an argument over the meaning of words, and it's very expensive because defamation lawyers charge a fortune. Trump was promising to open this up to make the remedy available to the common man and not just the rich. I don't think he followed through on that promise, which I think was a mistake, because

THE PAISLEY GATES

Clockwise from top left: Comedian-turned-activist Russell Brand, with whom Laurence briefly collaborated before being slandered by the mainstream press; Laurence Easeman; David Icke, a formative influence on Laurence; the Paisley Gates, the pub in Liverpool which Laurence renovated and kept open despite the lockdown restrictions

Trump's presidency was marked by constant defamation by the lying media, on a daily basis.

So the path that I took, suing Antifa for libel in the High Court of England and Wales was a rare and unusual action because I didn't use a lawyer and represented myself. I was fortunate, having been in and out of court for years fighting the banks, that I knew my way around the courtroom, how to draft legal documents and most importantly I understood how to use the tactics of court procedure to pushback.

To answer your question, yes its always an option not to fight back, and an easy option. But I was already conditioned for the struggle and chomping at the bit to clear my name and record another win, especially against Antifa, who are deluded agents of the bankers – the street enforcers of Usury. I was also concerned about my descendants having no other record of me other than the bile spewed out by my enemies. So I was determined to rectify the public record.

Also, for quite a long time after their attempted character assassination, if you put my name into Google there would be pages and pages of bile produced by Antifa and other anonymous goons defaming me. It caused me some bother as the objective of defamation is to stop you earning a living by attacking your reputation, which is where the remedy for defamation comes from: it is rooted in our common law right to earn a living. There was a lot at stake and I simply had to win.

First I sued Rhiannon Lowton for libel in the County Court, then I sued her boyfriend Adam Ford for libel in the High Court. Both were long-time Antifa goons in Liverpool with a record of working for the Labour Party.

I won both cases and in the latter case against Ford, I won damages of £10,000, which was the maximum I could receive but more importantly, I won a permanent injunction against the defendant, preventing him or his agents from smearing me with those allegations again. The key part is 'or his agents', which can be defined broadly and gives me grounds to counter-attack any future attempts at defamation, if I can be bothered.

It was a truly exhilarating moment when the judge read out his judgement. It was a clear and unambiguous victory. It was also a sweet moment for my family, who had faced persecution along with me because nothing is off-limits to these degenerates.

It's been eight years since that victory, and – touch wood – no one has made those allegations against me since, either because they know I will defend myself (and I have the endurance to fight for years) or more likely, because what power do those smears have after you've defeated them once already? As a result of the case, most of the blog posts were removed, though some still persist to this day. But I had the last laugh and the court judgement to prove it so it matters not to me anymore. They gave me the opportunity to put my name in the English legal history books. I snatched it and came out victorious.

Your fighting spirit was also alive and well when faced with the arbitrary covid restrictions. At the time, you owned a pub in Liverpool which you kept open despite the government's regulations. Did you face any repercussions?

A man should be driven by neither money nor power but glory. So once you have a few victories under your belt you're able see glorious opportunities more readily and thanks to my experience with the law, Covid was just that.

At the end of my legal struggles in 2016 I had to reinvent myself. So from rock bottom, I picked myself up and built a successful Airbnb business starting with one room in my house, growing to 40 apartments. I made some money, got married and had a child. It was a highly productive period. As part of that expansion, and a crazy rush of impulse and instinct, I decided to take on a pub in Anfield, Liverpool; a famous football pub near Liverpool's stadium but that had become derelict. It needed a ton of work but I went for it, and within six months, we had restored the pub, renamed it The Paisley Gates (after legendary LFC manager Bob Paisley) and reopened it. On match days, it was packed full of Liverpool supporters and became part of the LFC experience, being featured in a Netflix documentary.

Then in 2020, the greatest rug-pull in modern history occurred. Covid arrived and destroyed the hospitality industry. Within three weeks, the industry was dead and the fourth biggest sector in the UK economy was brought to rubble in a clearly planned controlled demolition.

Initially, I closed the pub and just watched the world burn from home. But I soon got bored, and out of defiance and a sense of mischief, I reopened despite everywhere else being closed. Within the legislation I had found a remedy that allowed me to sell alcohol as an off-license, meaning customers could purchase on site but had to take it off the premises to

drink.

I was one of only two other pubs that opened in Liverpool. As you can imagine, crowds of people swarmed outside the pub in search of a social pint among friends. It was also a magnet for other rebels of the narrative to cluster around and ridicule the absurdity of it all.

As a way around the law I was serving pints of lager with makeshift lids on, sometimes we'd just use a beer matt as a lid. I still laugh about that now. As word got out, the crowds became bigger and the NPCs in the area, offended by the people buying drinks from my pub, snitched to the police and council. So the local council sent in the police to try and intimidate me into closing.

It wasn't the first time I'd dealt with the police so I remained defiant because I was staying within the law and knew my rights. They attended in large numbers most days, but we persisted until the Covid laws were finally relaxed, and the crowds all returned to their local pubs. Despite all the threats from the police, the licensing department, and council, no action was ever taken against me. Obviously, I also refused to follow any Covid guidelines in my pub. We put on a show for the police when they came in, but the moment they left, it was back to normal, just like those films about prohibition era in the U.S. where they'd spin the tables over after the police had left. In the end, I left the hospitality business for good. It was a great period but I don't regret leaving it as it allowed me to do what I do now, and I love it.

You've challenged the state on several times in your life as just discussed, and have come out victorious or vindicated each time. Tell us about the premise you've discussed with me about the system being built on our consent, and how important it is we know our rights in order to defeat it.

The main question that hardly anyone ever asks is where does authority flow from? This is the foundation of a sovereign mindset - because the only authority that can be over you is that of your creator. How can another man have sovereignty over you without your consent? Only a tyrant assumes sovereignty over you without your consent; a tyrant being someone who forces you to do something against your will. Under such circumstances, you are a slave. Therefore, it's a man's duty to revolt, rebel, and resist the slavery of a tyrant, and reclaim the sovereignty that is his birthright. Unless of course you're happy to be a slave, in which case just carry on.

Of course, we can assign our sovereignty to another under consent, because sometimes the strong must protect the weak. But the responsibility for someone who is a fiduciary of our sovereignty is great indeed. They must be of noble character and work to uphold the law, common to all people.

So whenever the state or its agents profess to have authority over you, you must always ask: from where does that authority flow?

In England, authority of the police, the judges or the politicians flows from the Crown. And the king, now King Charles, takes a coronation oath and pledges to uphold the laws, the rights and freedoms of the people who grant him the right to reign. Therefore, the king's authority flows from the people. The people are sovereign, and it's the people who transfer their sovereignty on a conditional basis to the king. If the king or Crown fails to uphold their oath, then logic says that we can withdraw the sovereignty vested in it.

This is why in England, under the a common law system, we could claim exemption from the mask. "I am exempt" was the Jedi mind trick used successfully against the drones manning the gates. This is why the mask was not mandated, because it would be a tyrannical imposition against the social contract we have with the state. There is no law to support it. So the State manufactured consent through a psychological operation in order to persuade us to wear the mask willingly.

"If you don't know your rights you don't have any" is a famous maxim. How can you resist, or demonstrate your sovereign power if you haven't got a clue what's going on? Granted the State doesn't make it easy for you to understand your rights. They're buried across multiple statutes and other forms of legislation, but it's all there. You can definitely find them, there's no doubt about it. But they don't teach it in school. You're not given a comprehensive education upon your civic duties. We don't understand the Magna Carta, we don't understand the great history that we have in England regarding the common law.

Ultimately, it's written on your heart because we know instinctively what's going on. Embrace your instincts, don't suppress them. Reject domestication.

But you need to test your rights for yourself. Test the system. Push back. From there you will gain a knowledge and understanding better than anyone else can tell you. True knowledge only comes from

Darren Beattie / Alex Sheppard /Joe Kent / Amanda Milius / Richard Poe / Ned Ryun / Raw Egg Nationalist / Kash Patel / General Flynn AND MANY MORE

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experience and until you've tried to find the gaps in the plantation fence you will never truly understand or know what freedom is. Once you try, the gaps are everywhere.

In a recent article on your website, "Emancipate Yourself From Mental slavery", you provided readers with a practical guide for everyday life. Can you tell us a bit more about what you believe constitutes a free mind, and how do you reckon we've been conditioned to become mental slaves in our society?

The financial elite, who are committed slavers, figured out that literally putting men in chains was far more expensive than debt slavery, creating an illusion in your mind to keep you under control. Being masters of fear manipulation, this same elite use mental slavery so you act as your own prison guard and suppress your instincts for freedom.

That's what the 15-minute-city digital gulag is about. They want to keep you in an even tighter pen. But almost everyone who goes along with this does so by consent. They will literally volunteer for it.

As always, like the mask exemption, for those that don't consent there will be exemptions. "I am exempt" is the mantra.

This brings us to the sovereign mindset, which you have made as central topic of your podcast. What is a sovereign mindset and how does one attain it?

I think we touched on it earlier but to restate, a sovereign mindset is the mindset of a man, or woman, who recognizes that nobody is coming to save them. You are holding your rights and freedoms, and only you can take that responsibility. Therefore we must stand up, become a man, reclaim the sovereignty that you were born with. Expel the parasite.

Evict the entities who have usurped and installed themselves on the throne within. Ennoble yourself once again become free. Because once you reclaim your birthright, your nobility, no matter what the tyrants do, you will always be free. You will have escaped the plantation forever, regardless of whether you remain within it physically. By reclaiming your sovereign statue the slavers have lost you forever. This is why they spend so much money making you think it's pointless. If the situation was hopeless, propaganda would be unnecessary.

In essence it is a spiritual battle because your soul is the prize they covet most.

The programming we have been subjected to over generations is mindboggling, when you start looking at the psychological warfare that has been waged on the general population since at least a hundred years. From Walt Lippman and Edward Bernays, to the current psychologists devising content behind gigantic propaganda outlets in the media/entertainment industries, how does one go about "breaking the programming" as you've discussed in some of your podcasts?

Breaking the programming is not easy, but once broken a lifetime of conditioning can collapse quicker than Building 7.

Instinctively we know we're being programmed. We know that we live in a false reality. We scratch away at that itch because we know that something's not quite right. If you seek it hard enough, the redpill will find you and once you take it there's no going back. Find the redpill dealer in your local area, otherwise known as conspiracy theorists, and ask them for a big dose. They will be happy to guide you towards the truth and tell you where the emergency exits are.

Is there a specific moment where you feel you broke the programming in your life? Or was your red-pilling a gradual process?

I've always been a rebel and was kicked out of school at 15, but my life changed after the *The Biggest Secret* by David Icke in 1997. What had been that gnawing feeling deep within me was now brought into vivid relief. Reading that book was the gateway drug and changed my worldview forever, so when 9/11 happened I was already primed and could see it for what it was: a psychological operation against the people in order to collectively traumatise the masses and manufacture consent for the war on terror. 9/11 was the epoch-changing redpill.

Coming back to the topic of banking, and the viral video we mentioned earlier where you took them on, it seems obvious that our sovereignty can only come with an emancipation from the banking cartels running the world. With the monetary system currently in place, how do you see a way to cultivate independence, and more long term, a way out of the system? It seems it is on the brink of collapse, and either what will come next will be

utter enslavement with central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) with the collapse used as a pretext; or perhaps we will (finally) achieve freedom and set up a new monetary system?

We have to first become aware that the central banking system is a monstrous criminal cartel that must be totally and utterly destroyed. We have to understand that only a very small number of dynastic families populate this cartel and have been running the usury, inflation, deflation and the fractional reserve lending scam for at least 250 years, but most likely a lot longer than that. Banking is slaving by another name, and usury is the weapon used to run it. This extraordinary mechanism, is one of the four sins so harmful that it cries to heaven for vengeance, and is responsible for many of the ills we see in the world. Yet today hardly anyone knows or talks about in the West. It is the tool used to consolidate power through ever increasing centralisation. Decentralisation, then, is an integral part of reclaim your individual and our collective sovereignty.

How are you preparing for the coming few years, and how do you think we should navigate this imminent crisis?

The best way to prepare is by listening to everything they tell you to do, then do the opposite. CBDCs – just don't use them, find another way to be paid and to make payments. Build communities locally. If your government are digital tyrants simply move somewhere else. As you might have noticed, foreigners are treated better than natives. So don't be bound by a country just because you've got some idea of loyalty or fear of going elsewhere. Go to a place where your freedom is still respected. Those places still exist. Also, don't leave your money where the tyrants can easily steal it. Because they won't hesitate given the chance. "Six-flags theory" is a great place to start if you want to know more.

In essence, don't be a sucker. Spread the word. Share the information with your family and your friends. Start your own interest-free local currency. My great friend Anthony Michels is doing this in Holland with the Florijn. He has the technology to share.

With the collapse of the SVB bank and now Credit Suisse, we could be witnessing a monumental banking collapse. The whitepilled among us hope this is the beginning of the end for the bankers but the blackpilled believe this collapse is orchestrated by the banking families themselves to consolidate power for the next phase of their operation. I oscillate between the two positions.

You've said that the antidote is decentralisation, a return of power to local, smaller groups of people. I couldn't agree more. While it starts with our emancipation from mental slavery and the cultivation of a sovereign mindset, how can we fight the bureaucracy and lawfare being waged against us?

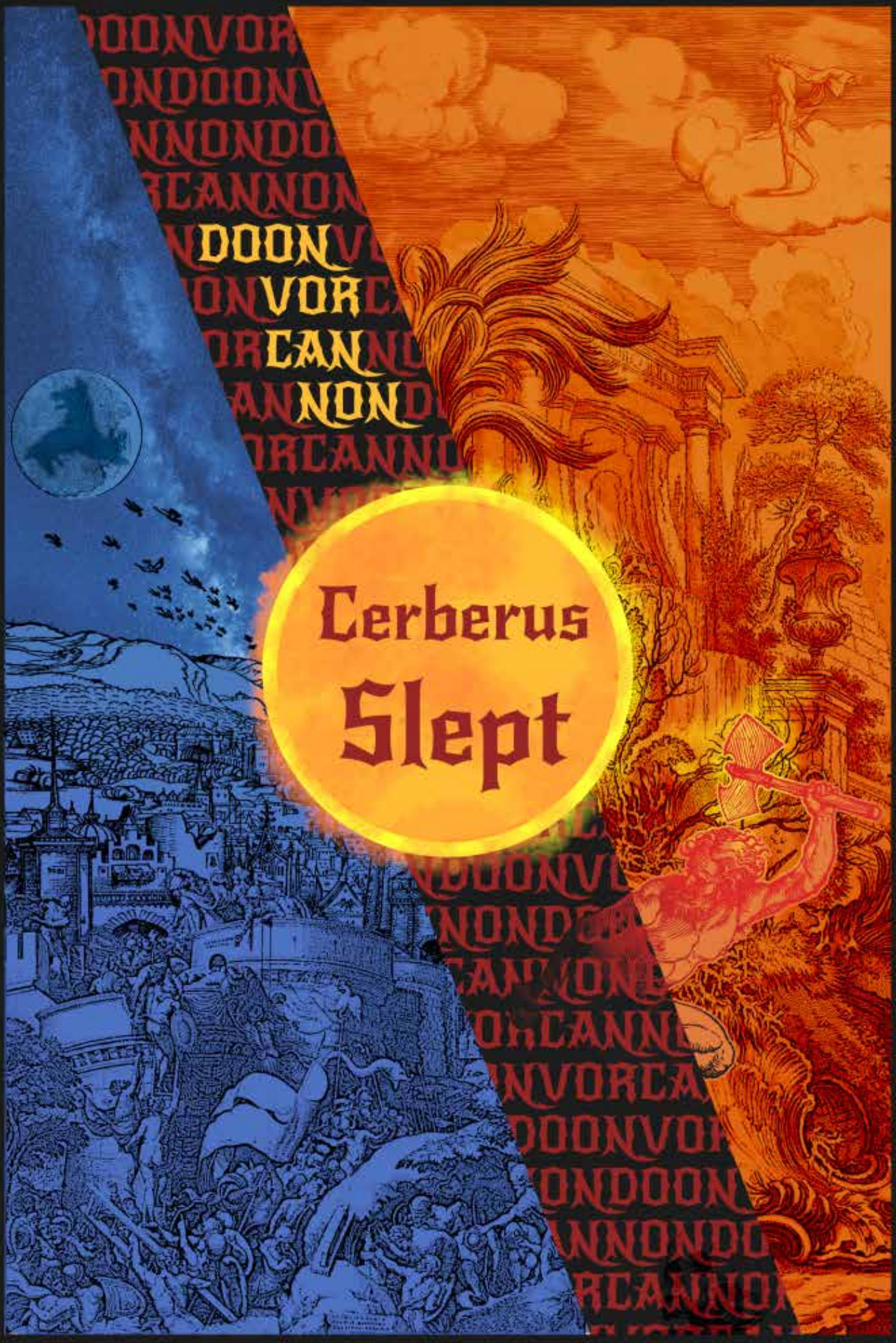
The best way to fight the lawfare that they use to grind us down is to simply not engage and ignore, because once you engage, you grant jurisdiction and the conflict escalates. At that point you have to see it through, which could take years.

This is why you must become a moving target and not domesticated or settled. Again, Six Flag theory is a good place to understand this. Copy the rich and "own nothing, control everything", which rather than being a WEF slogan simply means have no assets or property in your own name. Use trusts or foundations to protects your property. The state and its agents can only really target legal titles; therefore, move titles in commerce to avoid unlawful seizure by agents of the State.

Thank you Laurence for sharing your experiences and insights with us for MAN'S WORLD. Where can readers find your work and what should we look out for in terms of your future projects?

Thanks Noor, it's been a pleasure. You can find me on all of the social media platforms, but I ask people to sign up for my weekly newsletter, which is a weekly roundup of my content. You can find that at: www.laurenceeaseman.com/newsletter.

Also, I publish between 1-3 long-forms shows per week. They're all available on my channel Youtube channel, Laurence Easeman.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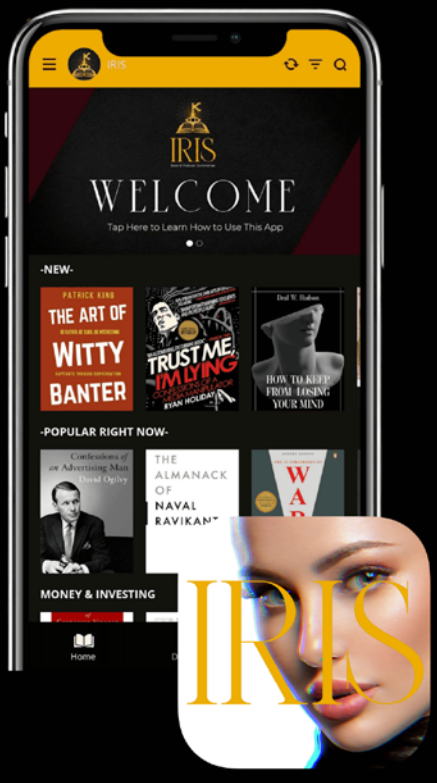

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book review

LORD MILES
IN AFGHANISTAN

by **RICHARD ENFIELD**

Readers may be familiar with a young man from the UK by the name of Lord Miles Routledge. He recently became well known online for his adventures in Afghanistan, and has just released an accessible travelogue of his experiences there in 2021. His story, set around the time of the Taliban takeover of Kabul, is an interesting example of the adventuring spirit which the West is in danger of losing.

The first question the reader may be asking is how the author comes to have "Lord" as a title. Some time before the events of the book, Routledge was inspired by a fake certificate of lordship he saw advertised as a practical joke online. He decided to walk into a bank, disguised with a suit and fake accent, and use the certificate to claim that he had recently been given a lordship and would like it reflected on his account. He was successful in asserting his nobility, and as he puts it now "regularly get[s] free upgrades on flights and hotels because they think I'm actually important."

As a university student in physics working part-time at a bank, Routledge was naturally seeking adventure. What better adventure, he thought, than to visit one of the most dangerous countries on earth? Many people had difficulty believing that he wanted to go to Afghanistan for pleasure. Even the woman working behind the desk at the embassy was shocked that someone would voluntarily visit her country. As a Catholic, he was in the habit of giving a tenth of his income to charity, and he explained that he would be doing this in Afghanistan as well. However, as the required personal statement "explaining the reason for travel" he simply submitted the word "fun".

"As the required personal statement 'explaining the reason for travel' he simply submitted the word 'fun'."

Routledge makes several interesting observations on the cultural differences between Westerners and Afghans. While in the West hotels can easily be located with a Google search, Lord Miles was brought to a secret hotel upon arriving in Kabul. As his Afghan guide Alem explained, those hotels which were publicly known were often targets for suicide bombings by the local branch of

ISIS. This hotel by contrast was hidden behind a 12-foot solid metal gate which was so thoroughly covered in posters that it could easily be mistaken for a part of the surrounding brick wall. Communication with those inside was through a small slit at eye level through which booking documents could be passed.

Another interesting cultural difference has to do with mountains, which are quite common in Afghanistan. White people love to climb mountains, and will even simulate mountain climbing indoors when no mountain is available. But when Routledge asked his guide about this, he had never heard of such a thing. The only reason Alem could imagine someone climbing mountains was for military training.

Afghans seem to have a more dwarven mindset. On a drive through the mountains, Alem pointed out abandoned mining caves, some of which had been converted into housing by the locals. This was not merely squatting by fugitives or the poor as we might imagine: some wealthy people choose to live in such an environment rather than in the city.

On the way back from a visit to the tomb of a renowned military commander who had fought the Soviets in the 1980s, Lord Miles was stopped at a checkpoint by a group of unfriendly-looking Taliban fighters. They noticed him looking with admiration at their armored vehicle with its mounted machine gun. Apparently seeing a chance for a good joke, Lord Miles asked if he could pose for pictures inside the vehicle. He acted as if he was firing the gun, then pointed at an imaginary target and yelled "infidels!" Thankfully the Taliban appreciated this light-hearted imitation of their customs so much that they invited him for tea, although he was unable to accept their offer as it was getting dark.

The most dramatic plot point in the book comes on Sunday, August 15th. On this day the Taliban demanded that the government hand over the capital city of Kabul or they would take it by force. The infamously incompetent and only intermittently paid Afghan National Army largely abandoned the city, so there was nothing to prevent the Taliban from seizing it. However, this does not mean that the transition was entirely peaceful.

News of the ultimatum lead to a great panic in the city. There was a run on the ATMs as people attempted to withdraw as much money as they could before evacuating, so the machines quickly ran out of cash. There were severe traffic jams, leading to people simply abandoning their cars in the middle of the street. Lord Miles and his guide made their way to the British embassy, but it had already been abandoned and was being looted.

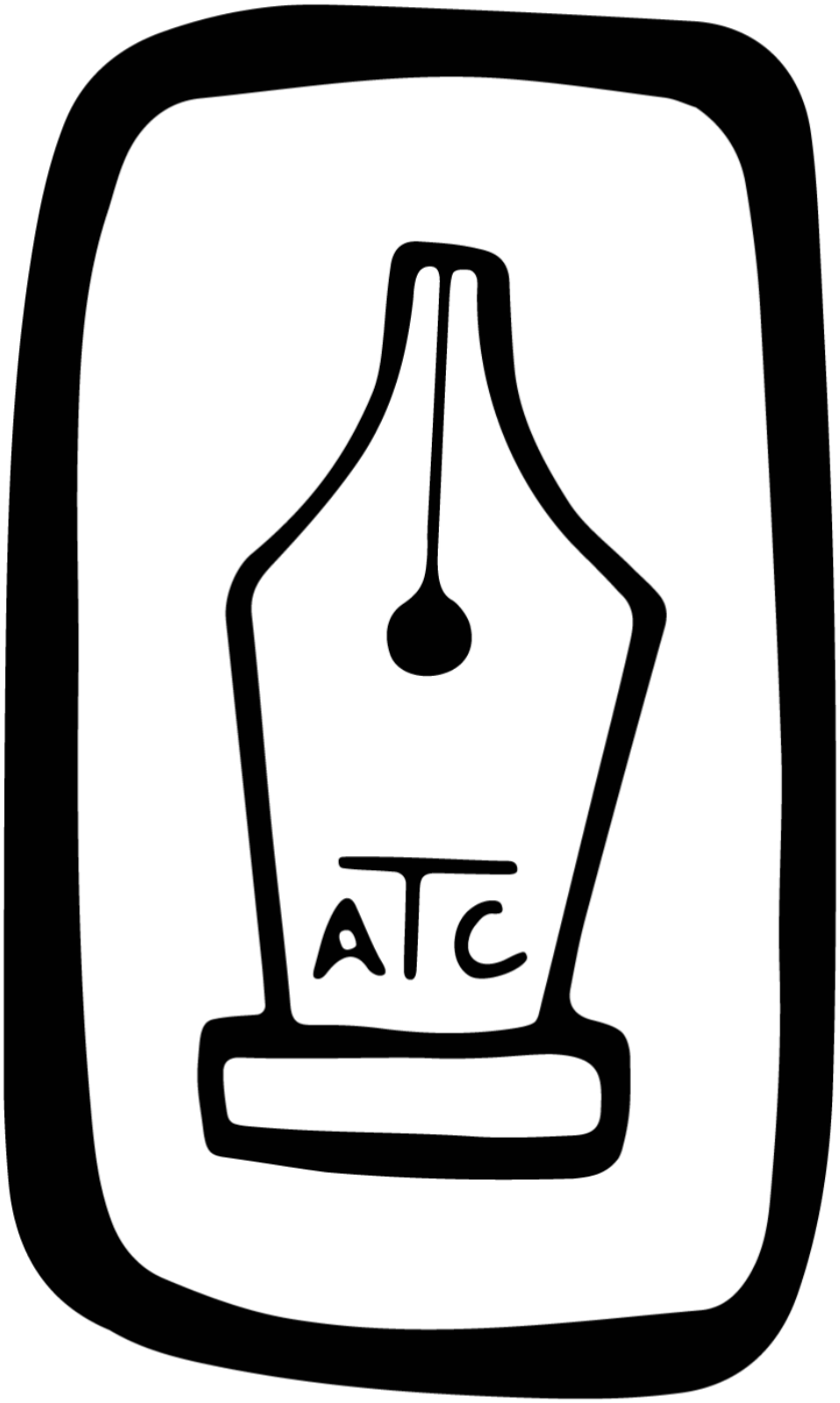
On his way through the city our hero also noticed several looted shops, as well as corpses in wrecked vehicles – presumably people who had been in a hurry to escape. He briefly disguised himself as a woman with a burka, hoping that he would not be recognized as a Westerner by Taliban who were already in the city and might be less friendly than his earlier acquaintances. Alerts on his phone directed him to the airport, but found there was no escape here either – flights had been grounded. The only good news was that there were a few friendly ANA soldiers who recognized Routledge from his 4chan posts.

Wandering through the city with the impression that the airport was no longer safe, Routledge and his guide wisely decided to follow a group of white people who "seemed to know where they were going." This led them to a converted hotel which was being used as a safe house by British soldiers. The soldiers explained to Lord Miles that they had already been driven out of another safehouse by a mob of Afghans. The locals, seeing that their money was no longer available at the banks, had taken to looting Western buildings, and the soldiers were only able to escape by giving them cash.

After a series of safe houses and a great deal of marching, Routledge was finally flown out of the country along with the soldiers in a NATO operation. There were also a number of Indonesian and Filipino workers evacuated, and during this process he noticed something strange about the culture of the Third Worlders. They seemed to be unable to understand lining up in a queue or even moving one at a time; "the soldiers would very clearly point to one person to select him to go to the car, and four others surrounding him would also start walking."

In the numerous selfies included in the book the author often looks unreasonably happy given the situation, which he explains in the text. Having become accustomed to sleeping on the ground while being briefly homeless several years before, he has come to prefer hard surfaces

New occidental poetry



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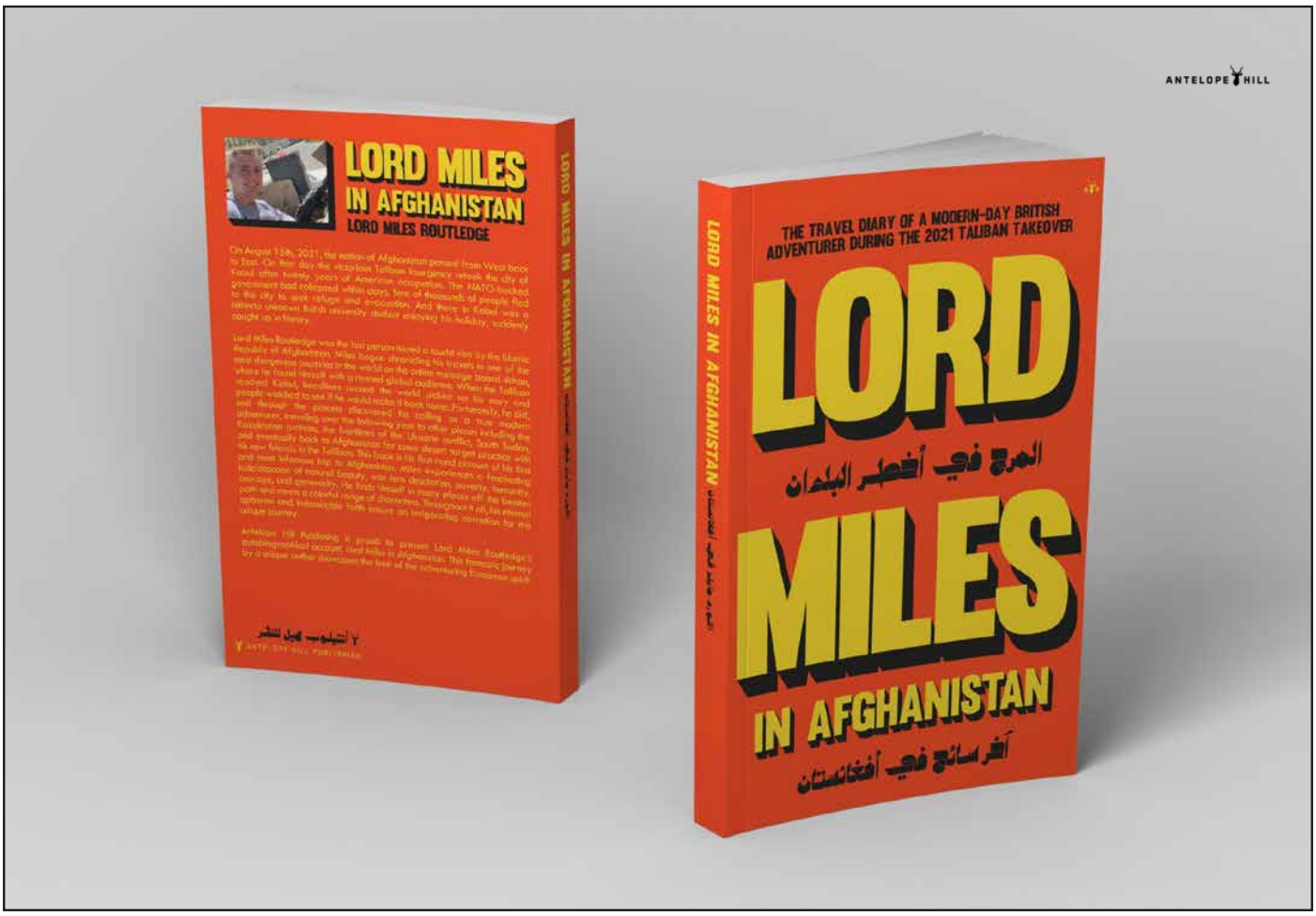
and shows an impressive appreciation of minor comforts in life. At one point he recounts falling asleep on a dirt road while wearing body armor which he describes as "comfortable." Lord Miles has elsewhere advocated spending money on experiences rather than possessions, and he has clearly done so and found it rewarding.

Routledge's aesthetic sense leaves something to be desired. The book is filled with color photographs of Afghan phenomena such as billboards, litter, traffic, and a porta-potty. However, there are also two interesting aerial photographs of Afghanistan, which could have been taken on another planet. From this and other landscape photographs he includes it is easy to imagine the broiling heat and the feeling he describes of being in an alien world.

This is the author's first book, written when he was approximately 22 years of age. It is well-written, despite occasional awkward attempts at description. His adventures first became popular through his posts on 4chan, and most of the book is thankfully as straightforward as a "greentext" post from that forum, but with better grammar.

The author has elsewhere noted that he comes from a family of malignant narcissists. However, he has apparently decided to use his inherited powers of pride and antisocial tendencies for more noble ends. Along with his self-appointed lordship, he recounts numerous acts of trolling and trickery, whether to advance his travel aims, to escape the oppression of service workers, or for his own amusement. In a time of severe conformity and lack of adventure in the West, his is an uplifting story that will hopefully inspire more in the future.

Lord Miles in Afghanistan is available now from antelopehillpublishing.com.



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book review

NUTRCRANKR, by Dan Baltic

by KEVIN KAUTZMAN

Dan Baltic's Nutcrankr is funny. Very funny. LOL, even ROFL funny if you're of the rolling disposition. Baltic has cranked out a timely and even urgent novel for our supremely stupid epoch, at which we can, should, and must laugh or go mad or worse: become normies.

In that way, Nutcrankr is better medicine than anything Saint Fauci could ever brew up in an offshore laboratory. You won't even lose your job and hard-won standing among some of the most brainwashed people in history if you refuse to take your Nutcrankr boosters. The good Doctor Baltic's special blend can be taken voluntarily and is available now in paperback from Terror House Press.

If enough of us read and metabolize this fine novel, surely Nutcrankr insider terms like "nut buddy" and "highly esteemed liberal arts college" will super-spread and grant us some measure of avant-garde herd immunity from the normie mind virus.

For the health of your loved ones and mutuals, you can and should read Nutcrankr at your earliest possible convenience. And for purely selfish reasons, ask yourself: "When is the last time I consumed a contemporary comic novel that elicits more than a 'sensible chuckle' at NPR-approved microvolume?" Nutcrankr might even make you chortle. Remember chortling? It's good for you. Trust the science.

Nutcrankr is the kind of book that "goes viral" not merely for its literary qualities, which are numerous, but because those around you are going to wonder why the heckerino this handsome and interesting fellow just did a spit take with his hand-crafted protein shake between sets!? That comely woman at the gym? The one you're afraid to so much as glance at for fear of being called a creeper by the unforgiving hordes on the 'Gram? When she spies you reading Nutcrankr while recording her own thrusting hips in the Smith Machine, she'll know you're not like the other guys.

No. You're not just another gym bro flexing your male gaze and posting fizeek. You're a man on the "scene." A man both of and athwart culture. A gentleman of

"Nutcrankr is the kind of book that 'goes viral' not merely for its literary qualities"

"Nutcrankr is better medicine than anything Saint Fauci could ever brew up in an offshore laboratory"

the old school, if you will. A reader of both "dissident" contemporary literature and the classics, much like the subject and hero of Nutcrankr: Spencer Grunhauer, a product of Baltic's wickedly rich imagination and a highly esteemed liberal arts college. You know the one.

In the spirit of A Confederacy of Dunces, this picaresque page turner invites us into Spencer's world and uses his whacked out, horrifically online and all-too-plausible Weltanschauung to lampoon and critique contemporary anti-culture and shed light on what I suppose we might summarily call the "contemporary crisis of masculinity."

In Nutcrankr, we ride shotgun through young Spencer's reliably ironic misadventures as his aberrant yet understandable view of the world, an admixture of an uneven "elite" education and way too much screentime, leads him to delightful ruin.

Spencer doesn't tilt at windmills. He is the windmill. "Look at me. I'm the windmill now." Things tilt at him as the foul winds of contemporary America pick up speed until inevitably he spins out of control, justifying himself to himself with weaponized cope all the while. The fun of the novel is in this spin and cope, and Baltic plants a bomb straight away in chapter one so we know where we are heading with poor Spencer. Prison.

In the novel's short opening spurt, we meet our hero in Attica (Attica!!) circa 2019, where we find him in flagrante delicto, trying to avoid another character's discovery of the same.

"Spencer knew he had to act quickly if he hoped to complete a gratification session before Tiny returned from the so-called yard… And there was truly not a moment to spare, as Tiny had been quite explicit when he said that if he observed Spencer in the middle of another gratification session, he would 'pull those nuts off.'"

It's a hell of an opener. Already we're (ahem) thrust into Spencer's unusual and untimely state of mind. Spencer does not wank, beat one out, or jerk off. He's far too refined for that. Rather he has "gratification sessions," and isn't that a nice turn of phrase and a lovely euphemism? Every gentleman deserves some gratification, even and perhaps especially in prison.

One is reminded of the Bronze Age Mindset bon mot: "Chimp in state of nature never jerks off, but in captivity he does, wat does this mean?" What indeed?

For a comic novel, the stakes are high, existential even. The Grunhauer family jewels are on the table in the opening paras. This isn't a book you'd call "light," and immediately Baltic loads us with more than a few pressing questions. Will Spencer live to crank again? Why is there a woman in a pussy hat on the cover? She could lose weight. Hmm. Why precisely is this tome called Nutcrankr, a puerile-sounding title that rather contrasts with Spencer's own tone and manner? And how on Odin's Earth does a thoughtful young man like Spencer, a sworn opponent of global Marxism and the excesses of postmodernism, end up in Attica (Attica!!!) in 2019 with a cellmate who wants to crank his nuts right off?

We find these answers and more only after a jolt back in time, ten years prior to the opening scene, where we land in the middle of an apparent affair between Spencer and his married Classics professor Nora Katz. If an explosive setup like this doesn't pique a reader's interest and at least push them deeper into the second chapter, said reader may want to seek gratification elsewhere. Perhaps a visit to the zoo is more their speed. The chimpanzees I'm told are quite lively!

As Baltic shepards Spencer on his pilgrimage to hell, he spits humorous derision not only at easy targets - the woke, pussy hat people, HR apparatchiks, poly BDSM simps, eGirls and the overfed professoriate - but right into the black mirror toward the "Manosphere" and the notably devastating effects it can have on young, impressionable, dispossessed and hornt up young men who spend way too much time online seeking gratification they will never find in

their screens.

A young man can be a spicy online anon and have a grand old time, but he must also live, work, and (like chimpanzee in zoo) mate IRL. The online and the real are not always compatible, and the further one drifts into the web, the stickier the IRL consequences can be.

Spencer's great online pursuit, his digital raison d'etre, is "the Project," a treatise and manifesto he knows will save the West from the global Marxists, postmodernists, pussy hat wearing hordes, and BDSM aesthetics. Who among us doesn't love a good manifesto, even a fictional one?

Ultimately Spencer takes to sharing the Project the only place online that will permit his seemingly insane screeds, a PornHub-like site the name of which you can probably guess. On the Nutcrankr forums Spencer discovers he has readers, an audience. He has "nut buddies." And aren't we all online looking for our nut buddies, for those who are sympathetic and like-minded? Friends who can relate to the plight of a fellow, a misunderstood genius even? he just like me fr

In the course of the novel, Spencer somehow finds himself at the 2017 Women's March in Washington with his girlfriend Crystal and a cohort of polyamorous BDSM-loving "perverts," led by Enrique, a rival from Washington Heights.

"As far as the eye could see, there was a vast hellscape of men and women crammed onto the National Mall to celebrate the false gods of global Marxism. Yes, Spencer was in the eye of the storm. And the name of this storm was the Women's March. Spencer was but one dot amid a bobbing, shifting sea of pussy hats, the uniform of the communist manhater. And at least in this respect, Enrique had not been misleading Spencer; everyone was, in fact, wearing the cursed hats. Grown men and women, many of whom were parents and citizens, stood proudly with the pink court jester beanie atop their heads. It was startling to see so many people abandon their dignity simultaneously.
'Isn't this great?' asked Crystal. 'It's like we're part of history.'"

This line from Crystal is telling. Spencer is haunted by the idea of history, which of course we were told in living memory had "ended." This is nonsense of course, but the notion does describe a certain vibe some of us might remember around the turn of the millennium. It would seem history has since come back like Bruce the Jaws shark to bite us all in our buster browns. Repeatedly.

History stalks Spencer Grunhauer like a bipolar art-ho ex who will not let go and has evidence of misdeeds. Grunhauer is the definition of the "untimely man," someone both out of time (he lives online and in his own head) and out of time (he's always up against the clock, as we see in the opening scene). And doesn't that reflect the situation now rather well, writ large?

Putting my They Live spectacles on upside down, a salty bit of criticism one might levy against Nutcrankr is that if you don't "get" the humor from jump, this novel isn't for you. This isn't a book that grows on you as you start to discern the point, and Baltic doesn't appear to care a whit whether you're going to sign up to be one of Spencer's nut buddies. There's nothing ecumenical here, and there's no olive branch that's going to give the skeptic a way in. And there is nothing a "sensitivity reader" apparatchik could do when confronted by el Nuterino except scream for their manager and maybe enlist ChatGPT to write some soothing ASMR gigacope.

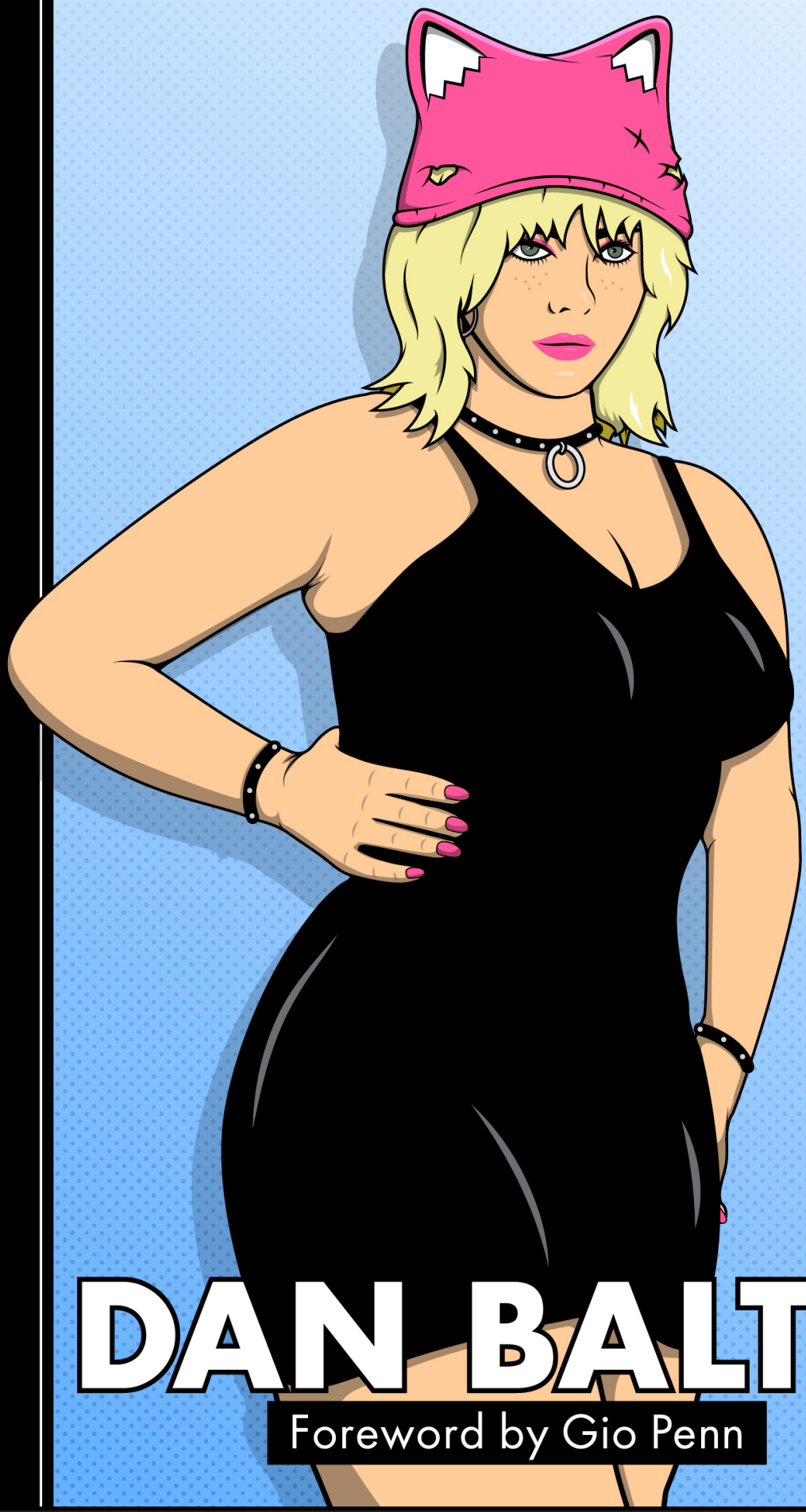
There is also no reprieve. Baltic strikes a crystal-clear comic note with his silver literary hammer time and again. He bangs out relentless punchlines on every page, sparking witty turns of phrase designed to delight those who grok what he's laying down. If someone isn't predisposed to sympathize with Spencer, they might enjoy Nutcrankr as a "hate read," imagining they're playing along with mean-spirited, irony-bro satire. But that would not be in the spirit of the thing.

Spencer is sympathetic. That's going to make some readers uncomfortable. But aren't we all a bit like Spencer, searching far and wide for our nut buddies? IRL and online. Men out of time, chasing some kind of gratification, meaning, and a key to the cage as the Geist of history cranks our nuts and the Big Zoo threatens to close around us forever.

Nutcrankr is out now via Amazon and terrorhousepress.com.

Kevin (@kautzmania) is a playwright and screenwriter. He is co-host of Art of Darkness, an arts biography podcast about the dark side of creativity at artofdarkpod.com.

NUTCRANKR



DAN BALTIC

Foreword by Gio Penn

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"Careful, honey. He doesn't slonk raw eggs."

GIVE UP THE GHOST

fiction by P.C.M. Christ

An exclusive extract from the upcoming novella from P.C.M. Christ (@plzcallmechrist).

Says the author, "Give Up the Ghost follows spiritual vagrant A.R. Scutt through the hypnotic and uncanny saturations of the South as he searches for his cousin's killer, but where he will discover much much more. Sometimes truth is only found in the dark."

I

The morning of the service sweltered. Georgia hot wraps you in a blanket. Whether that's a comfort or some of type of constraint, it don't much care. They all stood there with tears of perspiration pouring down their faces while the preacher dotted the corners of his mouth and then his forehead like preacher men do and he said that the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away and to everything there is a season and Ausby was gone but she lived on in memories and legacy and she'd be seen again someday when we meet again on that Heavenly shore. Amen.

We shall sing on that beautiful shore
The melodious songs of the blessed
And our spirit shall sorrow no more
Not a sigh for the blessing of rest

Atticus Remington Scutt bowed his head, mouthed an amen and made his way back across the lawn of Stone Church, est. 1823. Originally a hand-built wooden chapel of a step, a door and a sanctuary, and now a stone building with windows and a modest steeple, it had served as a garrison for God's will and presence long before Lincoln's War, and had continued since. The church stood at the bottom of a thickly wooded ridge with a now full and luscious green line of hickory, maple and pine, behind of which was a winding mix of dirt and gravel roads snaking through the hollar and on into the blue silhouettes of the mountains beyond, toward which the procession would be making its way.

He lit a cigarette and weaved his way through the headstones, tryna not to think about the entire lives buried underneath em. How now they was all turned into history. How we always bury em looking up. How hiding the person you love from view eventually becomes necessity. Out of sight, out of mind? Nah, just out your hands, boy.

A broad-wing hawk cried way over the heads of the single file march of the living.

The heat was saturating and, through his eyes-full of green, A.R. figured he could see waves coming off every leaf and blade of grass, like the sun had given too much life and was taking it back.

Funeral had had a decent turnout as a close casket affair is wont to do.

The family that mattered made it back to the house. Uncle Brooks. Uncle Danny. Dressed in Johnny Cash black. Shotguns and shine in the trunk. Mo(u)rning whiskey in their jacket pockets. A wood-burned plaque hung over sizzlin cast-iron and told anybody that came into that kitchen that food tastes best when it's cooked with love, and another said that mamas know everything cuz mamas said so. Mamas and Aunts and Nanas cooked the kinda foods they figured'd bring sweet memories and warm conversation. Kids running and hollering, inside and out, lost in the joys of God-given existence. Ausby's ghost 'sposed to be somewhere round there. Her daddy, Shane, sat just bout catatonic. Features fading to crepuscular. Ashtray with a hundred cigarettes burned down to the filter. Future packs stacked and unwrapped. Tops torn off.

After the meal, Antie dished out the banana puddin. She smiled sadly as she remembered out loud how Ausby's mama had taught em how to make it and how Ausby's always arguing how soaking the bottom wafers in milk and then mashing em down is better than crumbling and how Ausby's did actually taste the best and Antie hoped everybody still liked the banana puddin even though she was the one who made it and how she loved Ausby so very much and very much was a lot and that she would always love her, always. Ausby's daddy lit a cigarette with a cigarette and ashed on his puddin plate, her mama, Teresa, took to clean-

ing the kitchen, and A.R. stepped out for a smoke.

Was still hotter than shit, but the cicada's reverberations were giving way to the staccato chirps of katydids and crickets underlined by the bellow of frogs. Lightning bugs flickered like left behind remnants of the day.

The screen door added a rusty groan and a pop to the night as Brooks and Danny joined A.R. on the porch.

Evening. they said, lightin hand-rolled cigarettes of their own. The uncles had always been a source of awe for Atticus, two old-school-no-pink-in-the-middle whoop-your-ass-all-the-way-to-thechurch-and-back-at-it-again-hell-raisers. They looked a little older than his memories today.

Evening yall he nodded.

Hows your daddy?

Broken up. Wishes he could be here.

Yeah, we know.

Looking kinda jacked these days, aint ya?

Yeah, been hitting the weights hard. Eatin a lot of liver.

Glad to hear that. Listen bubba. We need to talk.

You know he's predicted this shit before, your daddy.

Right.

You know he's always been wrong before.

Yeah.

A.R. sighed smoked.

He wudn't wrong this time.

Yeah. I know.

I'ma get right down to it, Attie. We want you to fix this shit. We aint about to have a curse laid on this family.

We need you to. Everybody knows he predicted it. Now everybody's wondering how and why.

The brothers lit another cigarette.

How do you mean? I know my daddy is on some shit yall but...

Nah. Nah. Nah. We want you to find the sumbitch that did this. Give it all some closure.

Country justice, martial law, the righteous hand of a wrathful fucking God, I don't give much of a fuck what you wan call it. We want whoever the fuck did this strung up and gutted, ya heard me?

Hell, I'm with yall but whats that got to do with me?

You talk to your daddy and see what he knows.

Are yall tryna say my daddy…?

Hell no. But if he's got to speaking with angels and devils again, he might know something. Something hidden in the secrets. We figure you might have it too. Maybe you're the one it's going to take to carve this evil out.

Listen. Ausby...she passed down in Carroll County. Now by the grace of God your cousin Boss is a deputy round there as of recent.

I thought he's over there in Yoknapatawpha.

Naw, he came back last year to help somebody in office talking about sheriff this and that someday. Point is he got his dick swinging a little bit and he's saying he can bring you on out there as a consultant all incognegro.

Aight, consultant for what?

Boy, like I give a fuck.

Listen. You call him tomorrow and yall can go from there. Family will pay you extra you bring the Devil back alive.

Yall don't even think about paying me for this shit.

He put his cigarette out on his boot and spit.

You're a good man, Attie. Always was.

We'll figure out recompense later on.

Call it done. I'll talk to daddy and then I'll call Boss tomorrow.

They shook hands and Brooks clapped him on the shoulder.

Before you leave, come in here and get a whole bunch of this food. Don't imagine anybody wanting leftovers from a funeral.

A.R. and his truck cruised through the mountain like old memories, arm out the window, cigarette in his lips, glow on the dashboard, beer in his lap, baseball on the radio. Who needs heaven half the time? He roared up the mountain, feeling good but never smiling. Knowing the things would creep out later that night. Any thought turned to Ausby got put on the back burner. He figured he'd need this. One more glimpse of happiness, pure and simple, 'fore coming down that mountain and into whatever kinda darkness it was that murdered Ausby. That little baby was only twelve years old, godammem. Godamn em. Goddamn those cock sucking motherfuckers. You gon burn you baby back bitch. God fucking damn em.

A.R. pulled over the truck, trying to breathe. Tears falling in great drops. He'd had a lump in his throat that whole service, shoulda gotten swallowed down with the whiskey but there it stayed. Don't much expect or think about other people's deaths to be violent, least not the one's you love, very least of all the ones you've known since they were knee-high to a

grasshopper. Grief hit him like a Mack truck straight to the chest. He'd held that little girl since the first day she was born. She called him 'are' when she was a baby. He aint know all the details, but he was gonna be finding out and he already knew it wudn't anything close to Christian. He wept, hanging his head down on his chest in heaving sobs, wanting to lie down on the bench seat, but something just wouldn't let him. Pop the fuck up.

He swallowed hard, wiped his nose and snot rocketed out the window before lighting a cigarette and keeping it moving.

II

What was called home, and had been so for A.R.'s conscious life, was a three hundred acre compound on the top of a mountain, built deep into pines so thick you couldn't run a straight line through em. The dwellings and amenities consisted of a main abode, three bunk rooms, a fishing pond, an acre of muscadine vineyard, and several plots that had at one time all been used for gardens, most of which were now mowed flat into dirt, 'cept for the larger ones dedicated solely to strawberries and the like, the roads between which were lined with the gnarled witchy branches of peach trees; all the better to make and sell jellies and preserves to yuppy farmer markets, along with some damn fine ice cream, which was damn legitimate and legal reason to have at least half a ton of sugar on premise, and, well, mix that with the right something, preferably some corn, rye and barley, and hell why you at it throw a peach and a little cinnamon in the jar and we gon all be alright.

And so A.R. drove down that dirt path like he had since he'd first drove, eventually arriving at a

house full of memories, if not much else. It was a two story lodge underneath a large attic that had been converted to his bedroom, a consideration given to him as he was the only heir and prodigy of Cillian Remington Scutt. The same bedroom where his daddy used to come tweaking late into the midst of midnight, screaming recitations of the good ol' KJV Bible, Milton and Blake for hours straight, where the sunrise and the song birds would find a plumb tuckered out A.R. repeating back the lines his daddy felt were those that should be carried for the rest of his life.

His mama had been revered as she shoulda been, but she'd eventually become one of many. His daddy had divined a sort of hedonist path to transcendence based on some symbolism he abstracted from the ten plagues of Egypt. Of course, he was from the area and they wudn't having the heresy, so he descended down into the city and the slums, and brought himself back a ten woman harem. Got himself a couple widowers to buy the land in his name along with some colored girls and preached his version of kumbaya til the end of the whole ordeal. Hell, even after the federales had kicked the door in, somehow someway that man still kept the place and a couple girlfriends, just switched to making jelly.

His daddy was standing on the porch with his lady-friends when A.R. pulled up. Cillian wearing

what he called his bathrobe-of-many-colors over top of some lose pajama bottoms and flip flops, tilted his head hello and stumbled forward leaning way over the rails, nowhere near sober.

Welcome back, son.

Evenin.

A.R. loosened his tie as he walked up the steps, nodding to the ladies individually. Girls, yall take this food inside real quick, would ya?

He turned round and lit two cigarettes simultaneous and handed one to his son.

How was it?

His daddy had a way of exhaling questions.

Preachers still preachin. Saw Brooks, Danny and them.

They do right by Ausby?

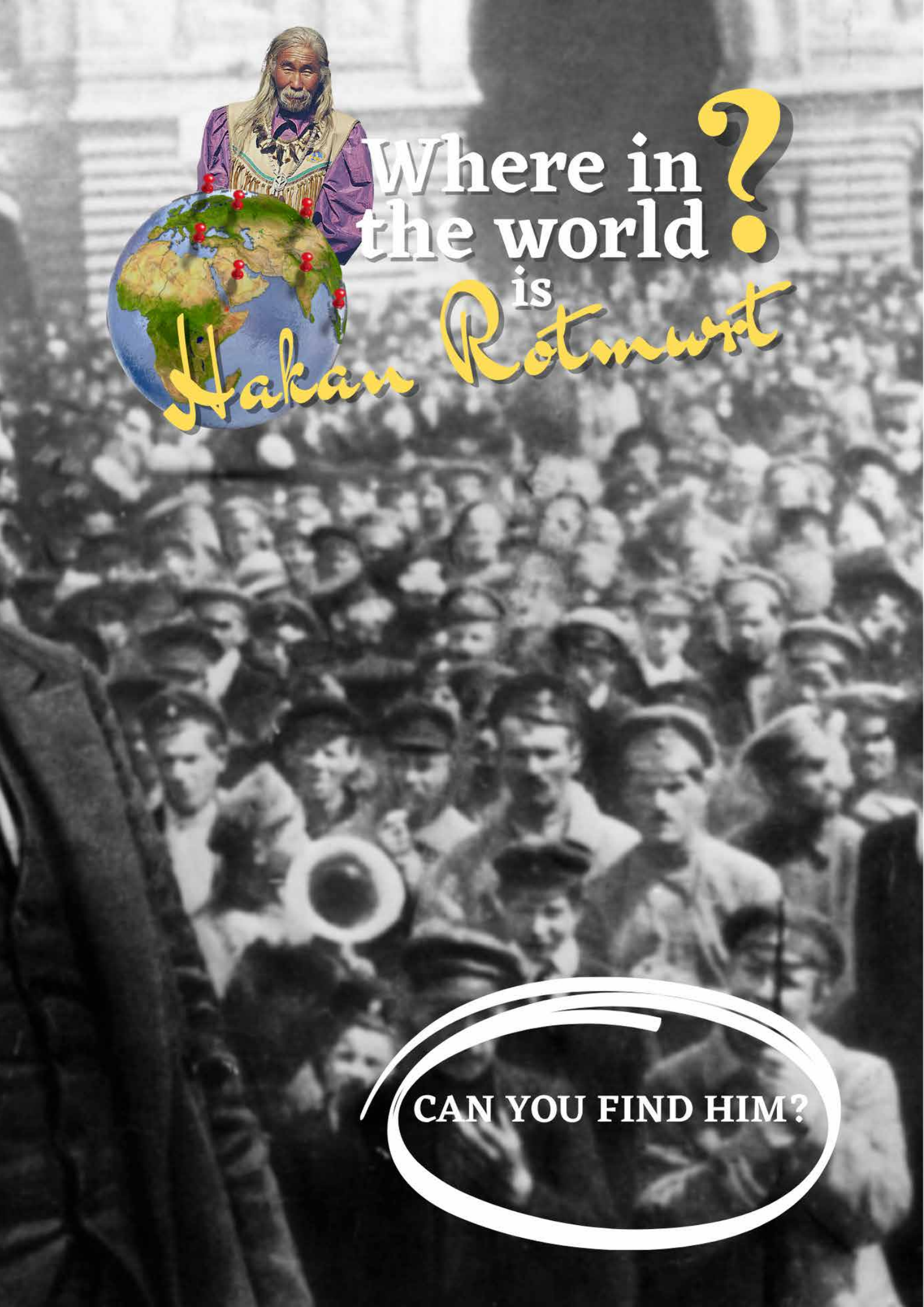
I guess. First closed casket I've seen. Got a whole different vibe to it. You just kinda wonder if they're in there, and even if you'd recognize em if they were. I didn't figure it would be like that.

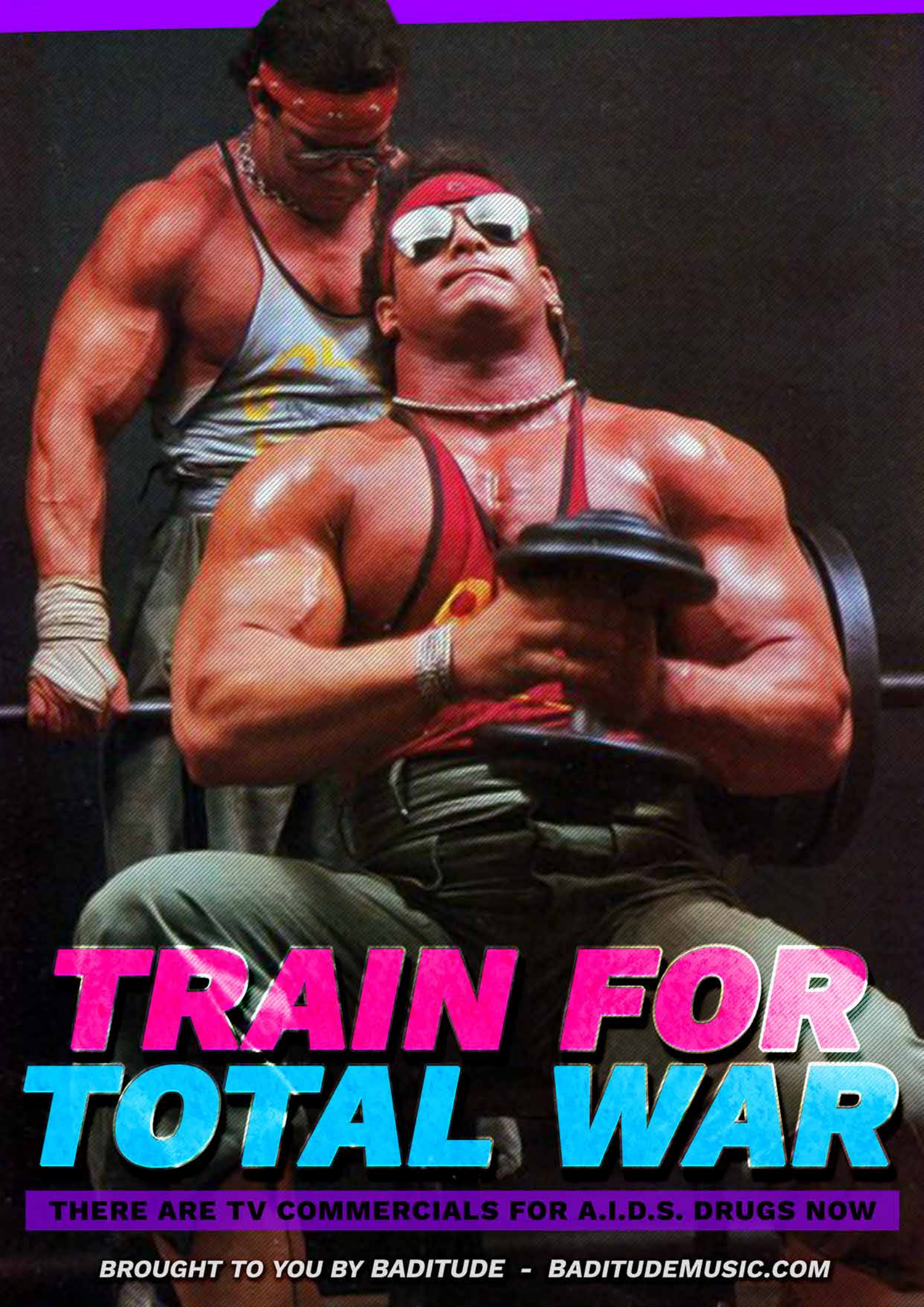
Cillian looked up at the Heavens.

I don't figure anyone does, son. I wasn't told how she would meet her demise.

A whole two hundred and sixty four days ago, Cillian had come hollerin runnin late-night-ear-lymornin through the house, shaking A.R. awake, screaming how the Lord had sent an angel, and how that angel had informed him that nobody ever goes to heaven and that a whole two hundred and sixty one days later Ausby, yes that Ausby, was gonna die, and how he'd tried to tell that angel that that wudn't a very angelic thing to say and the angel replied that maybe he'd'd never talked to an angel before, which of course he had, and he asked why'd the angel told him such a thing and that angel just shrugged and said figured he should know.

Well fuck why'd you have to tell everybody else?


Where in the world is Hakan Rotmurt?
CAN YOU FIND HIM?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Theyre fucking spooked man. A.R. spit.

Son, if one of God's messengers brings you Word then one must accept it as the Holy duty, blessing and burden placed upon them that it is. You do not share it to relieve yourself of it. You share it so that others might do with that Truth what God and they will. It is the unfortunate reality of prophecy that it does not consider our feelings on the matter, nor does it offer any consolation. In it's own way that is how and why it remains pure.

Heat lightning simmered in the background, illuminating the heavy silence of thunder clouds.

A little girl was just murdered and mutilated Dad.

And I have wept every night at the very prospect of that since it was foretold. Nothing I have just relayed gives me any peace on the matter, but it does not change the nature of it all. Much as I would like it to.

They stood in the silence of nature's white noise with the Milky Way spilled over top of them.

So, you know anything?

How do you mean?

In that vision you had. Angel aint give you any clues or anything specific?

Nah, bubba. Just a name and a date. Why?

Well, Brooks and Danny are spokesmen and the family want me to find the sumbitch for punishment.

Cillian's eyes flared with a charisma some called madness.

And now we know why it was I who was called to share God's message. Son, you are now become an instrument of God's divine judgment. You are his sword. DIVINE PROVIDENCE BATHES YOU IN ITS GLORY AND IT IS BLINDING! I can foresee it!

Cillian's eyes rolled back in his head.

Yes, there is indeed a most vile serpent, a hydra, lying in predatory wait amongst the filth of the Below. You who have been blessed from Birth now receive your Calling. Prepare and sanctify yourself tonight. Time is of the essence. I am not wrong!

Cillian puked over the rail and ran inside without another word, smoke and his robe-of-manycolors blurring behind him.

A.R. watched him go. For a short time, he'd been interested in psychology and analysis and all that mess. All he found that way was buzzwords and classifications. Joy. Mania. Depression. Bipolar. Schizophrenia. Spiritual products of consciousness. The acceptable price of being a human. Only Fear was native to animals. Seemed like everybody wanted to talk subjectivity but they wudn't giving any credence for individual faith. His daddy believed and so it was and so it shall be.

He spit.

Wudn't any wonder nobody could find or talk to God anymore. Start putting order on things that can't be ordered and all it did was make people feel small, reduced. How the fuck you gon bring the universe down to you instead of vice versa? He couldn't stand the arrogance, but even the truth didn't make life any easier, or watching his daddy discover it.

He considered another cigarette, but a drizzle had just started and it had been a helluva day.

His daddy was in his office, reciting aloud from The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. The women sat at the table, sharing a piece of pecan pie.

He declined politely when offered and stood staring at the railless stair case leading up into the darkness. Sighing out a breath, he ascended.

But for a bathroom and shower that had been installed, the attic was a large open space presided over by an a-frame roof of golden timber that was bronzed by the sunlight of each day through a large hinged window, which led out onto a veranda shaded by a hundred year old oak. His daddy's women had taken to the design using rugs to mark off the areas for his bed, desk, couch and bookshelves. He turned the overhead light on and took his boots off. With the nicotine of the day churning in his gut and buzzing in his mind, he sat down at his desk, trying, for just a second, to think of nothing.

The tree limbs out the window boasted at one another as they rollicked in the energy of the coming Summer storm, their silhouettes clashing across the wall. A.R. watched transfixed, drawn into their movement before reality began to swirl. An overwhelming and incorrigible flame roared into being in the back of his mind. Chained to his chair by the consuming vision, he could only watch the figures dance across the walls of his eyes, beckoning him toward acceptance, to be lost, to give himself to the holes in the light. His hands trembling sweat, he dragged himself, an act of pure will, stumbling toward the light switch, and collapsed with relief as the light and the shadows disappeared from view. It would seem some truths are only discovered in the dark.

He crawled back to his desk in the moonlight, panting, and mindlessly rolled his cigarette with a little weed sprinkled in. Gazing at the shadows of his bookshelves, he licked the paper closed. A brief flame haunted his features before he leaned back, sighing smoke signals toward Heaven.

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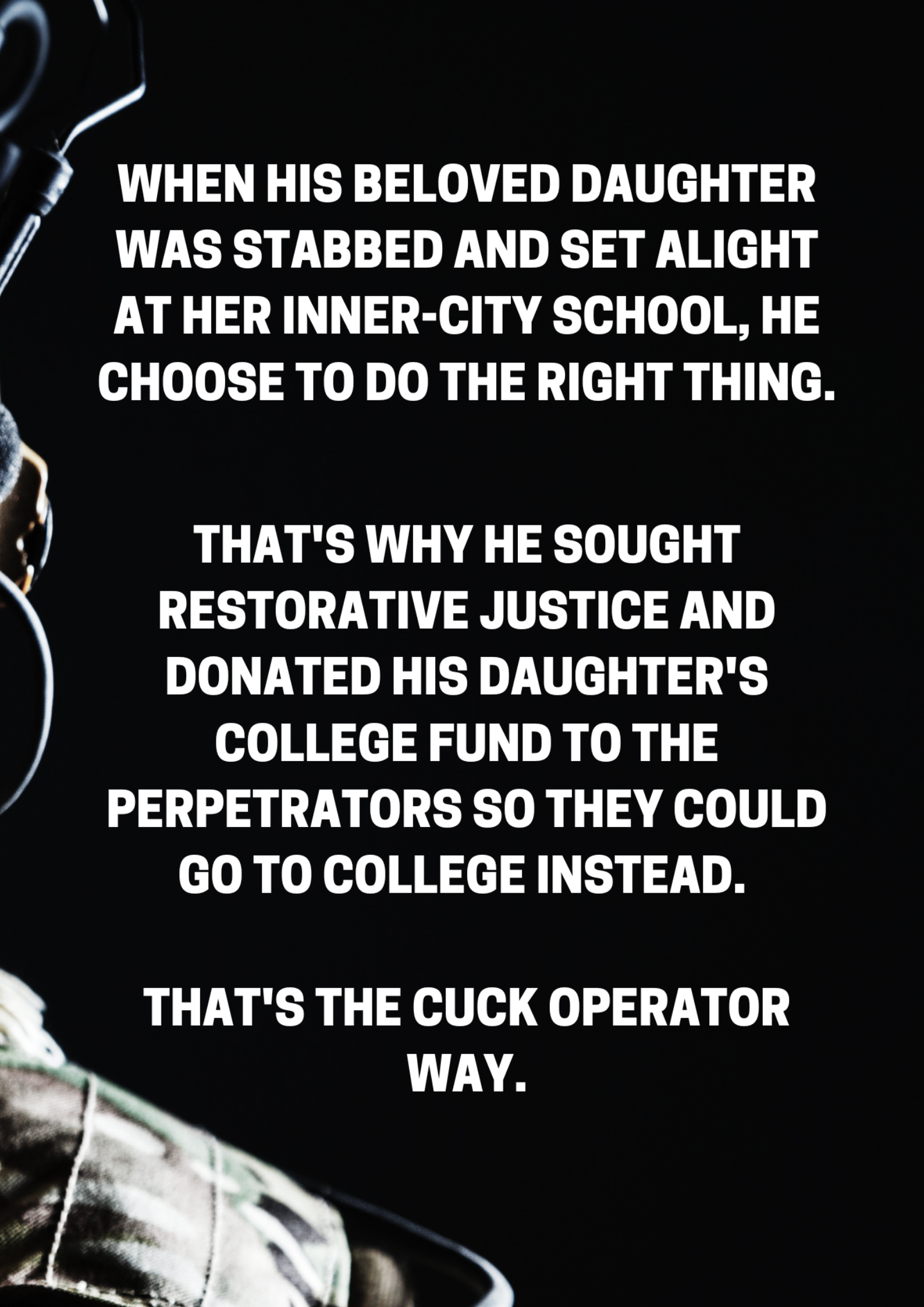
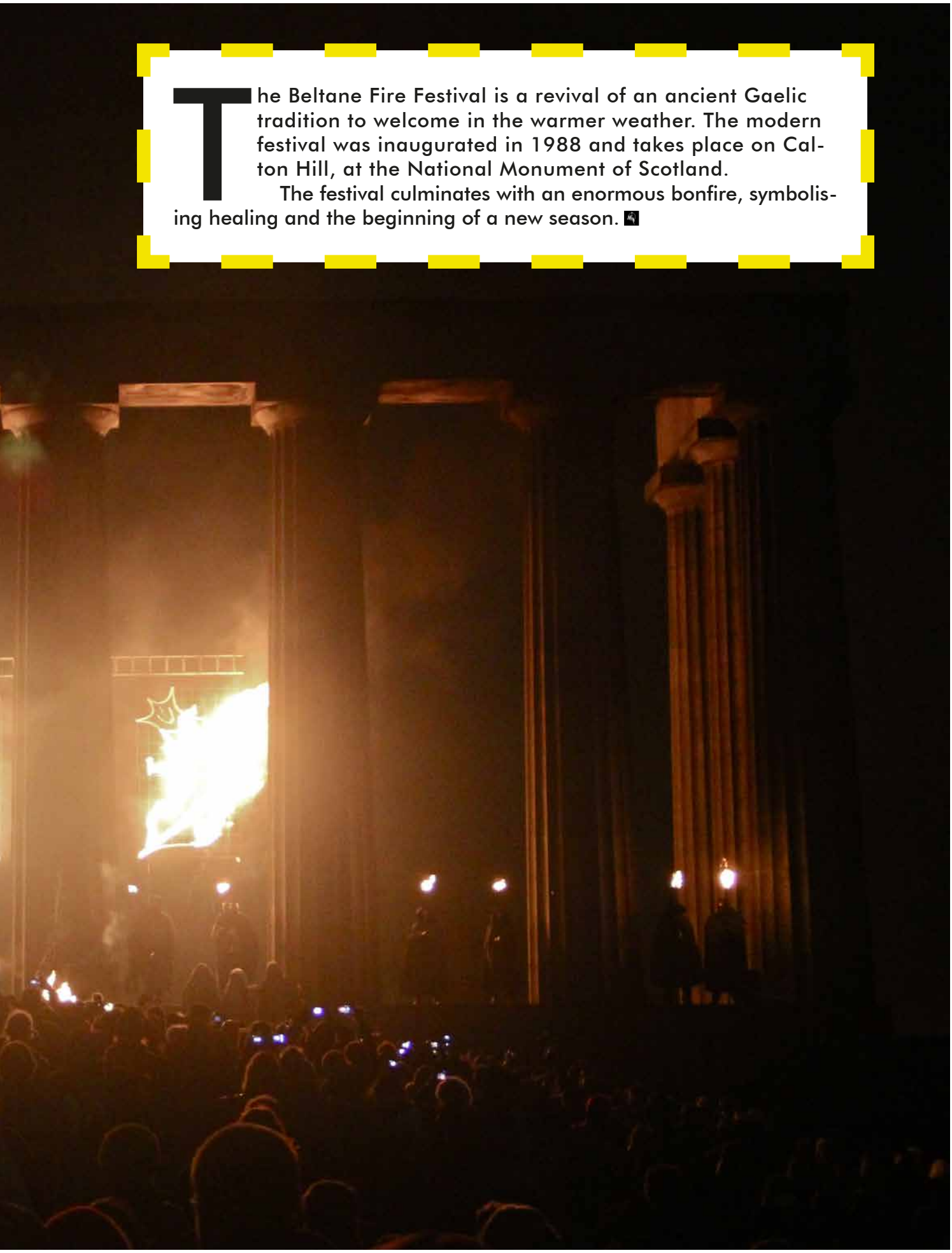

WHEN HIS BELOVED DAUGHTER WAS STABBED AND SET ALIGHT AT HER INNER-CITY SCHOOL, HE CHOOSE TO DO THE RIGHT THING.
THAT'S WHY HE SOUGHT RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AND DONATED HIS DAUGHTER'S COLLEGE FUND TO THE PERPETRATORS SO THEY COULD GO TO COLLEGE INSTEAD.
THAT'S THE CUCK OPERATOR WAY.

MW EXPLORE!

Beltane Fire Festival, Edinburgh, Scotland

The Beltane Fire Festival is a revival of an ancient Gaelic tradition to welcome in the warmer weather. The modern festival was inaugurated in 1988 and takes place on Calton Hill, at the National Monument of Scotland.

The festival culminates with an enormous bonfire, symbolising healing and the beginning of a new season.



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riders left the city at dusk,
toward the setting sun. They
left through the west gate,
which was no longer guarded.

Camp of the Saints *author Jean Raspail's enigmatic, mythologising novel* Seven Riders... *has never received a proper English translation. Here is the book's first chapter, translated by Smallest Violin (@xiaovilin99).*

Seven riders left the city at dusk, toward the setting sun. They left through the west gate, which was no longer guarded. They held their heads high, for they had nothing to hide, in contrast to all those who had fled the city. They were not fleeing. There was no treason among them, and nor was there hope. They permitted themselves no illusions. Thus were they armed, hearts uncluttered and spirits scintillating coldly like crystal, for the journey which awaited them. They were going on the order of the margrave. By his order they had been set in motion, and the youngest of them, who was not yet sixteen, was humming a tune...

The one who led them, an unattached colonel-major, the Count Silve de Pikkendorff, had been received by the margrave the previous night. Through the city's deserted streets, he had had to light his way by a torch, clasped in his raised grip, up to the castle. The gas had been cut months ago, and the glass and burners of the lamps broken. With the rising wind, doors and shutters rattled against the walls of the empty buildings, though there were few left in the abandoned city to be bothered this strangely noisy solitude. Yet some families lingered, in their carefully fortified houses, curtains drawn, shutters fastened. The only apparent sign of life was the pale yellow glimmer of a lamp, slipping through a gap in a curtain as it was shifted by some inner occupant, peering at the passer-by, before being hurriedly and fearfully closed. These were the last loyal subjects of the margrave. As long as light flickered from the castle, however dimly, so too would theirs remain lit. This was the sole certainty left to them, and their sole expression of it.

As he climbed the cobbled hill, Count Silve thought he heard a baby crying. His clattering boots fell silent as he stopped to listen, searching for the window from which came this precious chagrin, this little life echoing in the night. Choked by emotion, he drank in the sound of tears, as a desert castaway drinks a miraculous, life-saving rain. How many children had been born in the city in the last year? A count would have been brief, but nobody counted the sadness and

despair anymore. A woman began to sing a melancholy lullably, in an old mountain dialect, her voice occasionally breaking in a sob. Then the song stopped. The baby must have fallen asleep. Silve continued on his way.

He crossed the leisure quarter, a little higher in the town. It would once have been raucous with music and shouts, all windows lit up, from which perfect girls would have been leaning out, calling men with their beautiful white arms. The place was now all but silent and forgotten. One light, however, shone on the corner of a darkened street, like a memory in the night. Behind the glass, a young woman was waiting. Anyone in the city who mattered had loved her. Dressed in a white bodice with a plunging neckline, a silk skirt fallen about her feet, her black hair loose, and lying languid in an armchair near a glowing fireplace, she dreamed with her eyes open. Silve pushed open the door and entered.

"Why didn't you leave with the others?" he asked.

"And follow those dogs? No. Let them sleep with their women, but never again with Fédora. Silve, show me a little tenderness."

For a moment, he took her in his arms, and traced his lips over her face, whispering simple words to her. It may be said that the love received was worth only the love given.

"The margrave is waiting for me," he continued, separating with his hands the two bare arms which had been draped around his neck. "When I come back from the castle, I will return. I may be a long while."

Fédora dropped a log on the fire, which resumed its crackling.

"Don't be too late," she said. "See my supply of wood. It won't last until the morning. After that, it will be cold."

The street which climbed up to the castle passed beneath the walls of the prison, pierced with barred windows. The double doors to the compound were hanging open, and led into a deserted inner courtyard. Nobody manned the guard post, nor the four corner watchtowers which surveyed the outside. Prisoners and guards had disappeared, the latter no more worthy than the former: they had ended up fraternising, taking advantage of the margrave's neglect. The door had been unlocked from the inside and all had escaped. Now they were wildly pillaging the countryside. The latest reports from most of the province's mayors, seen some weeks earlier, spoke of villainy. Since then, nothing more had been heard. At the police headquarters, a little further ahead, an equally heavy silence reigned, disturbed only by the squeaking of the rats nesting among the documents. Here the agony had lingered, feeding on anarchy. There had been settling of scores between police officers. Death had swelled his ranks, by murder even more than by the epidemic which gnawed at even the most hardy of the city folk. There too had the law of numbers played its game. The corrupt had found themselves masters of the place, then had fled the city, a vein of gold which had been exhausted. The police superintendent, rich to the point of obscenity, had not survived the pillaging. Acquitted by a complicit high court during its last session before the great scattering, and on the order of the convalescent margrave, Count Silve had executed him personally. This evening the colonel-major, hastening up the steps which led to the cathedral forecourt, halfway to the castle, once more considered, without remorse, the pure joy he had felt in discharging his pistol into the skull of the wretched man.

On the pediment of Saint Aulick's cathedral, named for the city's patron saint, the founder of the dynasty, a rose window of the Last Judgement - at least, what was left of it - glimmered faintly in the night. The archangels no longer had their faces, and all that remained of almighty God was his raising hand of justice, held in place only by a few stalks of lead. The vandals, bored, had taken themselves elsewhere to sate their appetite for destruction, and the next gust of wind would bring it down. With its stained glass windows now gaping, open to the icy air, the only life around the great nave was the rustle of black owls and their unseen flights around the pillars. It seemed all the more vast, now that it had been so completely ravaged. As the supplies of coal and firewood no longer arrived at the city from the provinces, the neighbouring university, the police, the Treasury Hotel and several other feckless institutions had fed their fires with its chairs, choir stalls and enviably-carved Renaissance-era confessional booths. It was their vengeance against the church. The cardinal archbishop, his arms crossed before the high altar, had barely saved the sculpted altarpiece, dating from the 10th century, upon which Saint Aulick was offering his hand to the Lord Christ and the Virgin Mary. As the religious effects were being looted, he had refused utterly to suffer

the smallest scrap of wood to be taken to fuel his own fire, and shortly thereafter, he had died of cold, and of grief, in his small monastic room in the episcopal palace. His old housekeeper in her cornette, from the Auxiliatrices de Marie, had been warming her cracked hands on a bowl of soup she had been offering him. He had been a saint, and a good man. No one had noted his death, least of all the margrave, who had never thought of him as more than a kind of ecclesiastical marionette with his protocols, welcoming him on the forecourt of his church in his capa magna, his tassled hat and his red socks, intoning words that generations of margraves had known word for word. Before what remained of the officialdom of state, he had been buried under the slabs of the high altar, in the company of his antecedents. There had not been time, before the marble workers had left, to engrave his name and its honours in stone. As the world turned, he would be forgotten. God alone would remember.

Entering the cathedral, Count Silve noticed a light at the back of the choir. This light was reflected in the last shards of the rose window. On his knees before the Blessed Sacrament, dimly-lit by a half-dozen candle stubs, a man was praying. Hearing the steps behind him, the man rose and turned, quickly drawing from his broad sash a cavalry pistol, which he levelled at the newcomer.

"Ah. It's you, Silve." he said.

By the violet of the sash and cassock buttons, as well as by the cross on his chest, Silve knew him to be a bishop. A young bishop. Monseigneur Osmond Van Beck, City Co-adjutor, had barely passed thirty-five, the same age as himself.

"Did I frighten you, Osmond?" the count asked.

The bishop smiled.

"You know well that you did not. I shoot straight, and true. I would not have missed you."

"Indeed," returned Silve. He gestured with a hand at a corpse lying in the shadows. It still clutched, in its stiff grip, a sawn-off hunting rifle. "Who was that?"

"An Amanitian. Some still lurk around the city. Those who have nothing to lose, knowing they are already lost."

A hallucinogenic mushroom whose particularly destructive effects included aggression and the illusion of invulnerability, the Amanita Oronaise, having ravaged the youth of both East and West, had made its appearance in the city and the wider country several years ago. Hesitant to undertake any drastic measures while there had been time, the margrave had resisted it only perfunctorily. With the complicity of the police, and certain monied powers, the Amanita Oronaise was cultivated in greenhouses in the capital by various gardeners. Its devotees had formed a sect that was at once both organised and anarchic, and the ranks of whose members, the Amanitians, were unceasingly replenished. This was in spite of the fact that, within a few months to a couple of years, the mushroom killed all those who indulged in it. There was no remedy, and no exception. Of all the evils that beset the City, this was not the smallest.

"A boy," remarked the count sadly.

"An animal," replied the bishop. "A moment's choice. It was him or me. I could have donned a martyr's crown. I need only have hesitated. Up there the Lord would have welcomed me, and life down here is not much joy. But in service of the Lord, here on Earth, which of us was the more useful? This wretched boy, or me?"

"And God gave you the answer?"

"Time was short. I answered for Him."

"Do you regret it?"

"Certainly not," replied Bishop Osmond, with an unfeigned indifference, "though I would in any case be unable to make a confession of it. Aside from me, there are no more priests in the city. The last left yesterday. He was the hospital chaplain. He ran through the sick wards at a gallop, granting a wave of general absolution as he passed, and then, abandoning his stole, he dressed himself as a civilian, and vanished. I went up there this morning. It's horrible. All those people are dying. What can we do?"

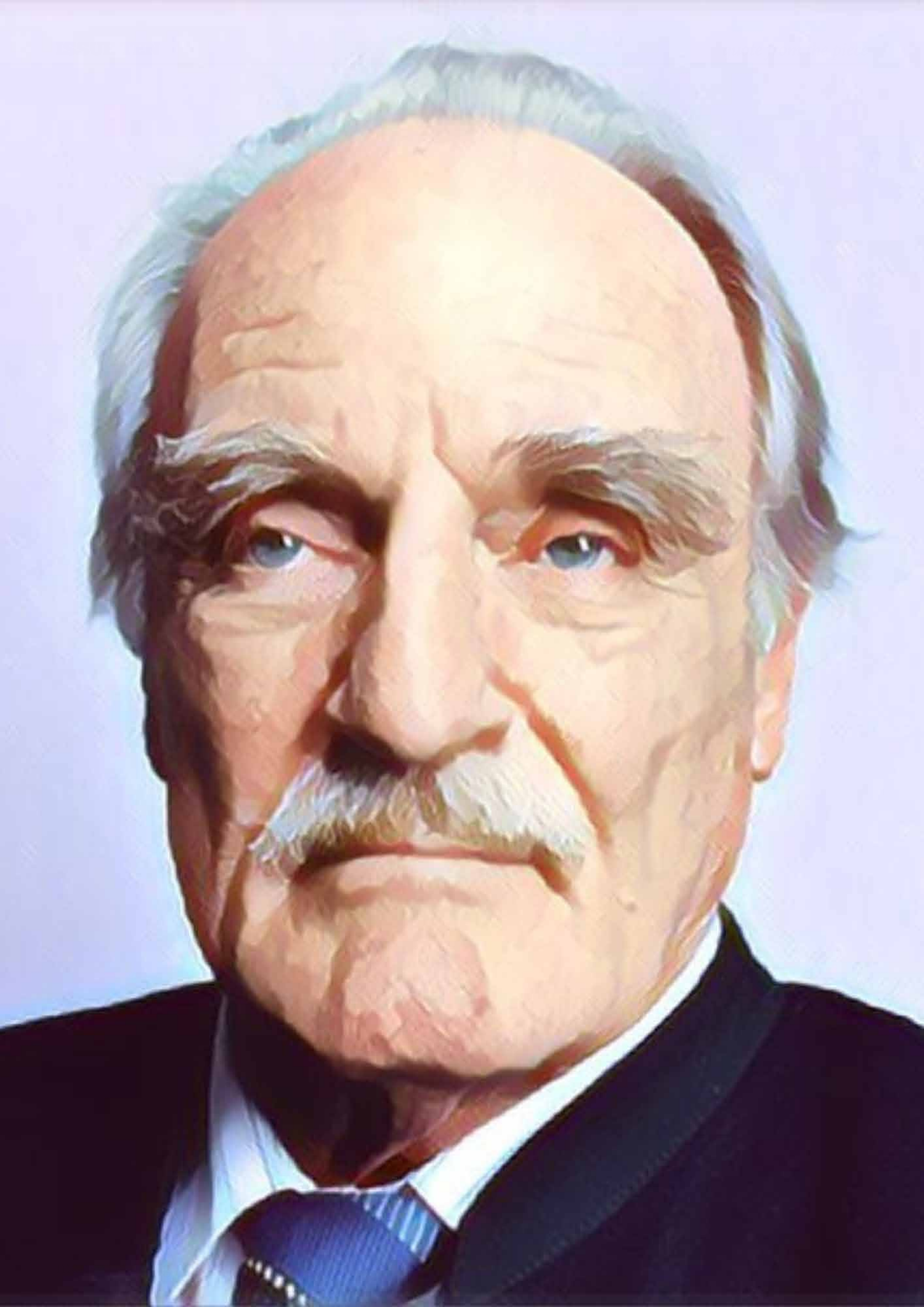
"Nothing." answered the count.

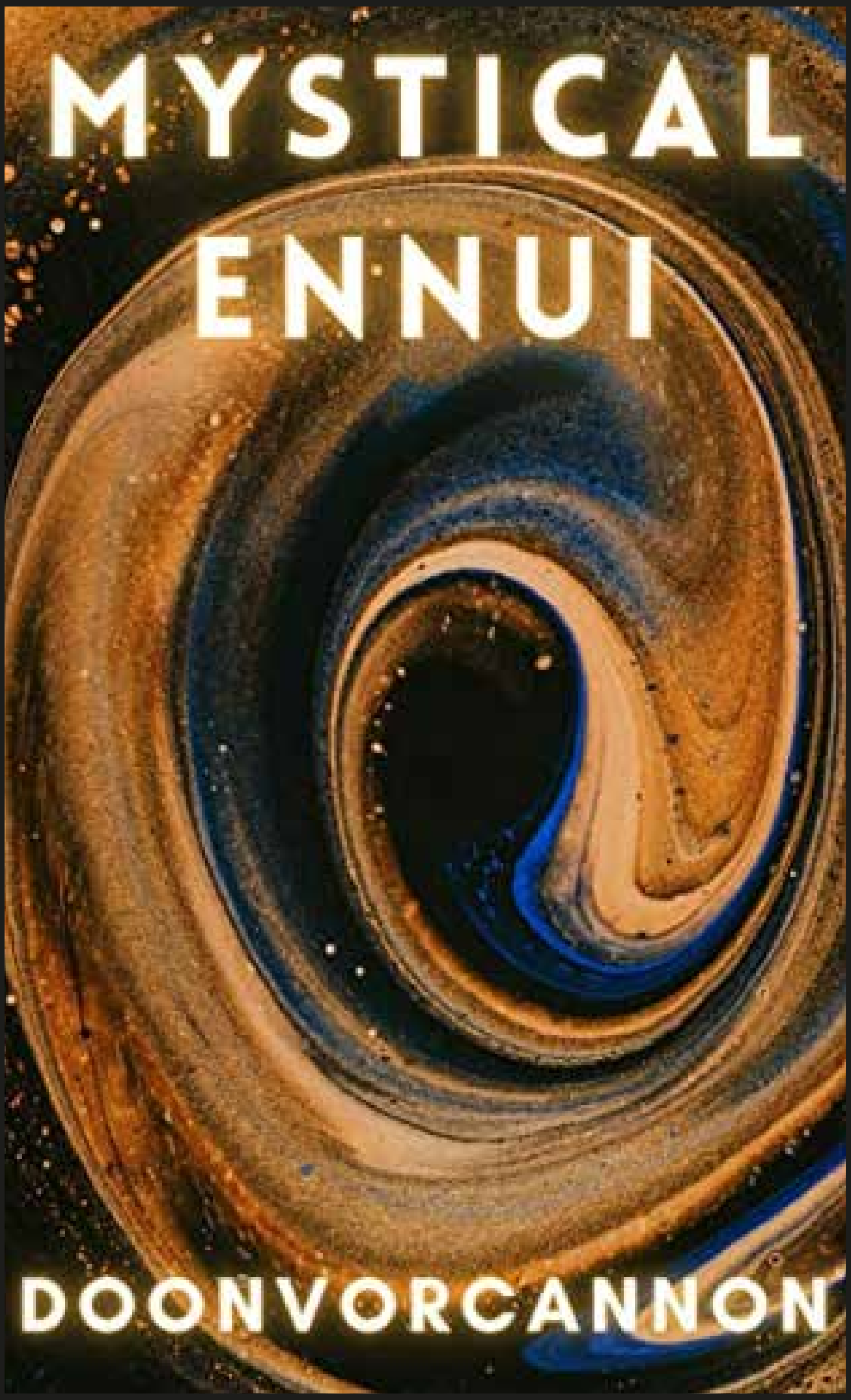
He and Bishop Van Beck had known one another a long time. In happier times, they had together escaped the city's lounges and high society, and ridden together across the surrounding countryside, with its sandy flatlands studded with beeches and birches. They had sat on a tree trunk, beside a fire, and shared a roasted hare. They had the same way with words, that is, they were frugal with them.

"It is the hour of salvation," continued the bishop. "You're in luck. The beadle is also gone, and the sacristan is dead."

"The margrave is waiting for me," said Silve. "Around him, too, lies a desert."

"One moment, please. Ring the bell. A lone man can ring the smallest one, the Bumblebee. It's the

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red-braided rope."

"You think anyone will come?"

"I doubt it."

"Why, then?"

The bishop raised his arms, offering his outstretched hands to the sky.

"To call Him. He makes Himself scarce, these days..."

"Where are you spending the night, Osmond?" Silve asked, "After I see the margrave, I'll have much to tell you."

"At the sacristy. I have a camp bed there, and a fireplace, and a solid door with a lock. I also found some benches, so I will keep warm."

At the top of the bell tower, the count untied the red-braided rope. As the clapper began to swing, a great flock of owls took flight. The bell rang out over the empty city. To Silve, the cathedral bells, even when they had all rung together, had never seemed so loud as this one did now. He rang so determinedly that at one point the bell-rope was gently lifting him into the air, just as they had all done when he and his classmates at the nearby Military Athenaeum had earned the privilege of ringing them. Many an enraptured boy had flown on the bell-ropes. He found his heart warmed by this memory, and indeed also by seeing Osmond again. The bishop was an oak. Nothing could tear him down.

A bell, once rung, continues to ring for some time. It carries on, alone, sounding between increasingly long pauses. One thinks it is over, and then the clapper hits home one more time, and perhaps another. One says the bell dies. The Bumblebee was a long time in dying, and as it died its peals accompanied the count's march through the rising, empty streets. Before the tall gates of the military governorate, the sentry-post was abandoned, as were the neighbouring barracks of the cavalry, infantry and artillery. To ensure the margrave's protection with his few remaining men, Silve had withdrawn them all to the castle the previous day. Of the three regiments which had garrisoned the city, he had eight officers, among them four commissions, and eleven men. Half were locked in the citadel. The game of watches and guardsmen meant that there were now rarely more than two men patrolling, in almost total solitude, the length of the battlements, their one hundred and fourteen cannons each engraved with the margrave's coat of arms. The other half formed the defence of the citadel. Silve reached the guardhouse at the entrance and announced himself, barking into the night.

"Pikkendorff!"

A shadow appeared at the peephole.

"I'll open the gate for you, Monsieur le Colonel."

As he waited, it occurred to Silve that over the course of the day in the once gay and bustling city, whose warmth had charmed all visitors, he had heard only four voices: those of the mother and her baby, of Fédora, and of Osmond. This then was the fifth. It belonged to a young officer, dressed in the black tunic with scarlet trim of the margrave's cavalry. Carefully closing the heavy gate - Silve found himself having to assist, as the young man was alone - he then introduced himself.

"Lieutenant Richard Tancréde." He looked apologetic. "There aren't enough of us left. Major Wilbur has been acting governor of the castle since Governor Moreno's death. He has ordered that officers be placed on duty rosters alongside the men."

"I know."

"I also can't escort you further, Monsieur. My orders are to remain here, and I shan't be relieved for several hours."

"No matter. I know the way."

Once upon a time, buglers would have relayed their call from post to post, all the way to the castle's central courtyard, announcing the arrival of a colonel-major summoned by his sovereign. Once upon a time, he would have been escorted by the duty lieutenant, a quartermaster, and three cavalrymen, sabres drawn, all the way up. He would have been saluted through all three gates by white-gloved officers. Once upon a time, an honour guard in ceremonial uniform would have paraded before the steps of the peristyle, where the governor himself, the right hand of the margrave, his private secretary, as well as a cloud of valets and huissiers in chains of office, would have awaited him. Once, the margrave's black and gold standard, with its three silver alerions, would have flown proudly from its high pole on top of the ancient keep, lit by the crossed beams of four spotlights. As the gas had run dry, the late Governor Moreno had ordered that a pair of beacon fires be lit on top of the keep, as had happened in times of invasion, when the embattled populace could draw comfort and courage only from the assured presence of its sovereign. Each could reassure himself simply by lifting his eyes toward the castle and its keep crowned with flame, which proclaimed that it was not over, and that hope was not lost. Then the wood too, had run

out. The standard still flew throughout the night, but now made its presence known only to the castle's remaining occupants, and then only when it slapped in the wind. Furthermore, save for a few remaining faithful, it had lost its symbolic strength, now exciting even hatred. A frenzied and irrational hatred, appearing from elsewhere and nowhere, both uncharacteristic and unprecedented in the city. On the margrave's last birthday, many had still put out the traditional flags. Yet rapidly, the same morning, lawless bands of Amanitians, joined by disorganised - or perhaps organised, for nobody knew - groups from outside the city, as well as some more able-bodied patients from the hospital, had attacked the houses of those who had dared fly the flag of the sovereign, sowing panic in their wake. One had even climbed the cathedral bell tower, tearing down the standard, and hurling it into the void, to the wicked glee of the mob below. The gendarmes had fired warning shots, before breaking and fleeing in a rout before the stampede. An hour later at most, the city's great tradition had been no more, with shutters closed and doors barred, and armfuls of flags, torn from windows, had lain in the streets.

Climbing briskly, and noting as he passed the empty sentry boxes at the three gates, Silve reached the grand courtyard along a passage planted with beeches. He walked on a thick carpet of rotting leaves. For want of gardeners, the park was no longer maintained. As he crossed the courtyard with its high peristyle overhead, lit now by a single torch, he felt his heart sink. Once, amidst a symphony of lights, a white curtain would have been imperceptibly pulled aside, at a certain window on the ground floor, belonging to the margrave's private rooms. Behind this curtain would have been revealed the glowing smile and dazzling blonde hair of Myriam, the margrave's only daughter. Myriam, who would have welcomed him with a furtive hand gesture, an innocent breach of protocol, before letting the curtain fall back. Myriam who loved him, Myriam whom he loved, and Myriam whom had been sent away from the city by her father at the beginning of the epidemics.

At the foot of the steps, two figures were waiting for him. Silve recognised Major Wilbur, a loyal old soldier who had seen it all. He looked ghostly in the silver-grey tunic of the margrave's infantry. The other was only a little younger. The death which stalked the city carried off the young more than the old. It was Biron, the head huissier, in his black coat and neckchain.

"How is his Serene Highness?" Silve asked Wilbur.

"It is cold, and he is thin, yet he remains in good health. But he no longer speaks, and stays shut in his library. He reads. He seeks answers. He spreads out great maps. I send him meals. He eats little, and quickly, as if he believes time is running out. Even though time, Monsieur le Colonel, is the one thing we have no shortage of, and little use for. Since this morning he has been pacing back and forth. Then he called for you. He seems to have made up his mind about something."

"I'll go to him," said Silve, shrugging off his greatcoat, as protocol demanded.

Biron interrupted him with a gesture.

"His Serene Highness asks that you keep that with you. The corridors are like ice, and the rooms hardly better. Monsieur le Colonel, I'll escort you."

One behind the other, they passed dark and empty rooms; the Huissiers' Office, and that of the castle governor, the Ambassadors' Room, the Privy Council Chamber, the Privy Seals' Office, their lifeless interiors lit only by the kerosene lamp which Biron held high. The portraits of successive margraves emerged from the dark, and again returned to it. Aulick the Second, who had repulsed the Huns; Aulick-Frédéric the First, who alongside Godefroi de Bouillon had led the assault on Jerusalem and had seized the Gate of Zion, been the first to enter the city, yet had refused any fief in the Holy Land, and had returned in penury after healing and freeing his captives; Welf-Frédéric the Fourth, who had put an end to serfdom, and Welf-Frédéric the Ninth, who had fought at Lepanto, on a galley of the Order of Malta, equipped at his own expense; Welf the First, known as Welf the Generous, who founded the hospital after having undertaken a lengthy journey to seek advice and benediction from Vincent de Paul; Aulick-Frédéric the Fifth, vanquisher of the Mountain Chechens...

It was a courageous and compassionate dynasty, of moderate ambition, but one whose power and influence was felt far beyond its borders and modest population. It was not beneath the great men of the world to seek the advice of the margraves of the city, and the oppressed knew that there they could find justice. Under normal circumstances the castle's rooms would never be empty. The diplomacy of the

margraves worked in favour of a general good.

The final room, before the staircase which led to the private suites, was for the aides-de-camp. Elegance, good humour, courtesy, and duty. Young officers of the garrison each served their turn there, never numbering fewer than six. Visitors liked to stop there a while for the company, and even the most austere would leave it with a smile. Now a single candle shone from the six-branched chandelier, illuminating a lone, young man, sat on a sofa reading, wrapped in a frogged greatcoat. As the colonel-major entered, he leapt to his feet and presented himself.

"Cornet Maxime Bazin du Bourg. Regiment of Artillery."

"What were you reading, my boy?" Asked Silve.

"Kostrowitsky, Monsieur le Colonel."

Wilhelm Kostrowitsky, the greatest poet the city had known. Silve closed his eyes, and recited:

"I wintered in my distant past
Returning with the Easter Sun
To warm my icy heart..."

Cornet Bazin continued for him:

"My memory, my keel and mast
Have wicked tempests we outrun
enough to raise a glass..."

"How old are you?" Asked Silve.

"Twenty, Monsieur le Colonel."

The age of conquest, of great expanses, of farewells without returns. Silve sighed. There was also honour in serving with the last of the rearguard, in a dying world.

"Will you be here long?"

"All night, Monsieur le Colonel. Mine is the final watch."

Stood on the first floor landing, overlooking a long corridor, the sentry, a brigadier, swayed gently in a doze. He was leaning on his rifle, butt to the floor.

"Get some rest," Silve told him, indicating with his hand a sofa in a corner. "I will wake you when I leave."

As they reached the end of the corridor, Biron gave two smart raps on one of the doors. This discreet knock, which alerted without irritation and warned without insistence, was the result of forty years of practice and a velvet wrist. The old huissier was very proud of it. A bell rang in response. Biron opened the door and, with an extreme artistry, somehow both advanced and slid into the room. He announced Silve in a quavering voice:

"His Excellence Monsieur le Colonel-Major Silve de Pikkendorf."

Then he retreated lugubriously from the room, muttering to himself:

"This castle attacks the throat. My voice is going..."

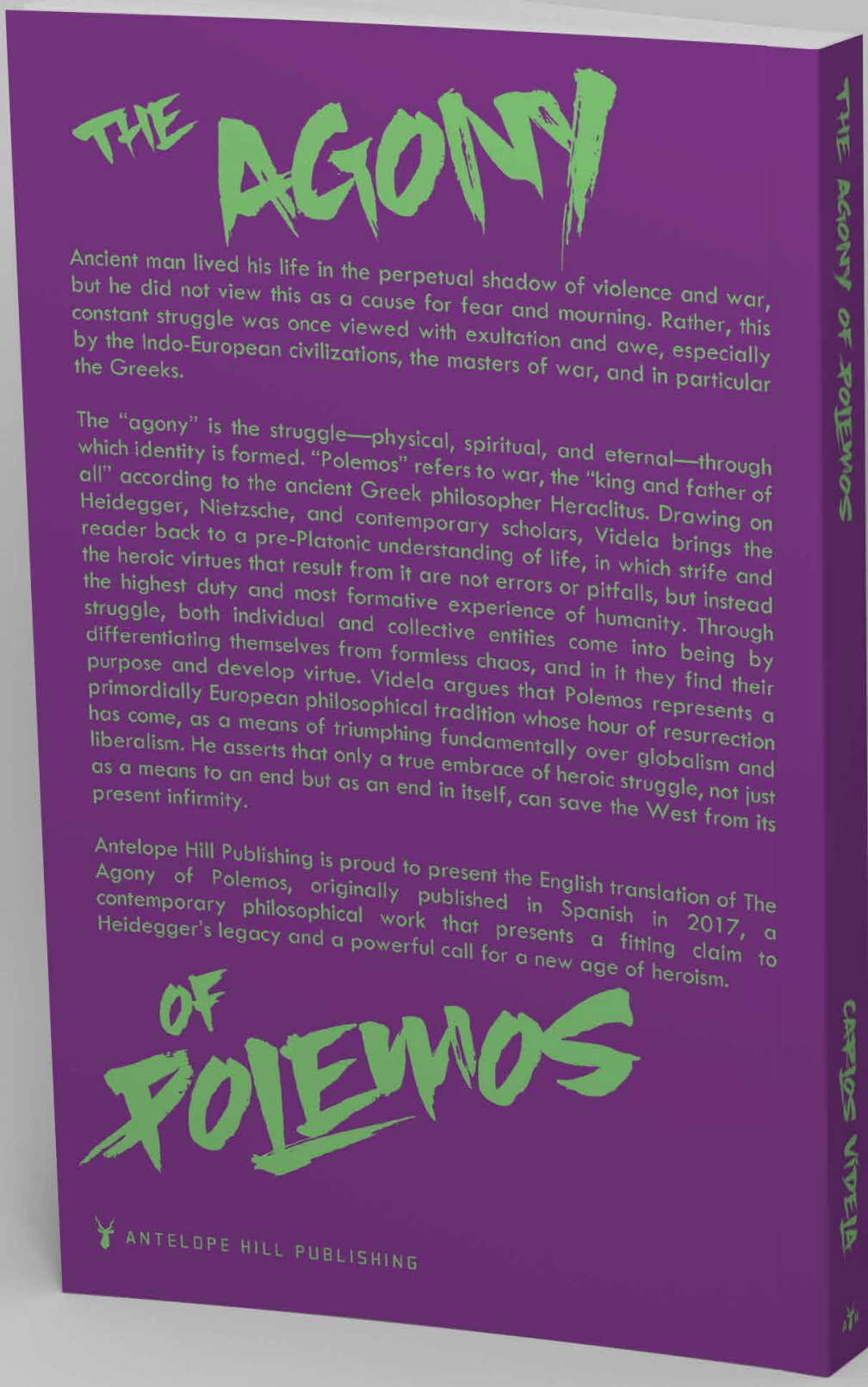
"Approach, Silve. Come here. Come warm yourself. Wilbur found me some peat. By the Lord, I accepted it. I cannot govern if I am frozen."

His quip was accompanied by a sad smile. His Serene Highness, Welf the Third, Margrave of the City, had always been a man to state the strict truth of matters. He did not try to force fate by disguising such truth. This cautious attitude explained why he had been so hesitant over the last year. With his dry comment, he was admitting the present state of affairs: Beyond the castle walls, he no longer governed anything, or anyone. Silve ignored the remark. Placed on a pedestal table was a daguerreotype, in a silver frame, of Myriam. It was no official portrait. In her jodhpurs and riding jacket the young girl, standing beside her horse, seemed to smile twice over at Silve; once with her mouth, and again with her eyes. It had been taken after a walk they had been on together, and it had been he who had offered it to the margrave.

"Your Serene Highness, have you had news of Mademoiselle?" He asked.

Thus was the princess known.

"Let's drop the protocol, if you please," said the margrave. "Under the circumstances it would be foolish of me to insist on it. The last I have heard from Myriam was more than four months ago. A brief and poorly-deciphered message just before the last telegraph line was cut. She had reached Sépharée (a fortified border post far to the North), and was preparing to cross the river when the bridge across the border was cut off. We don't know by whom or how. The message didn't say, but did observe that the border post opposite, that of our neighbours, the République des Vallées, appeared completely abandoned. The message ended there. I immediately sent a patrol, with relay horses and twenty days' supplies. Only one man returned, and even he didn't reach the city. He was found with his throat cut three leagues from here, naked as a


THE AGONY OF POLEMOS
Ancient man lived his life in the perpetual shadow of violence and war, but he did not view this as a cause for fear and mourning. Rather, this constant struggle was once viewed with exultation and awe, especially by the Indo-European civilizations, the masters of war, and in particular the Greeks.
The "agony" is the struggle—physical, spiritual, and eternal—through which identity is formed. "Polemos" refers to war, the "king and father of all" according to the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus. Drawing on Heidegger, Nietzsche, and contemporary scholars, Videla brings the reader back to a pre-Platonic understanding of life, in which strife and the heroic virtues that result from it are not errors or pitfalls, but instead the highest duty and most formative experience of humanity. Through struggle, both individual and collective entities come into being by differentiating themselves from formless chaos, and in it they find their purpose and develop virtue. Videla argues that Polemos represents a primordially European philosophical tradition whose hour of resurrection has come, as a means of triumphing fundamentally over globalism and liberalism. He asserts that only a true embrace of heroic struggle, not just as a means to an end but as an end in itself, can save the West from its present infirmity.
Antelope Hill Publishing is proud to present the English translation of The Agony of Polemos, originally published in Spanish in 2017, a contemporary philosophical work that presents a fitting claim to Heidegger's legacy and a powerful call for a new age of heroism.
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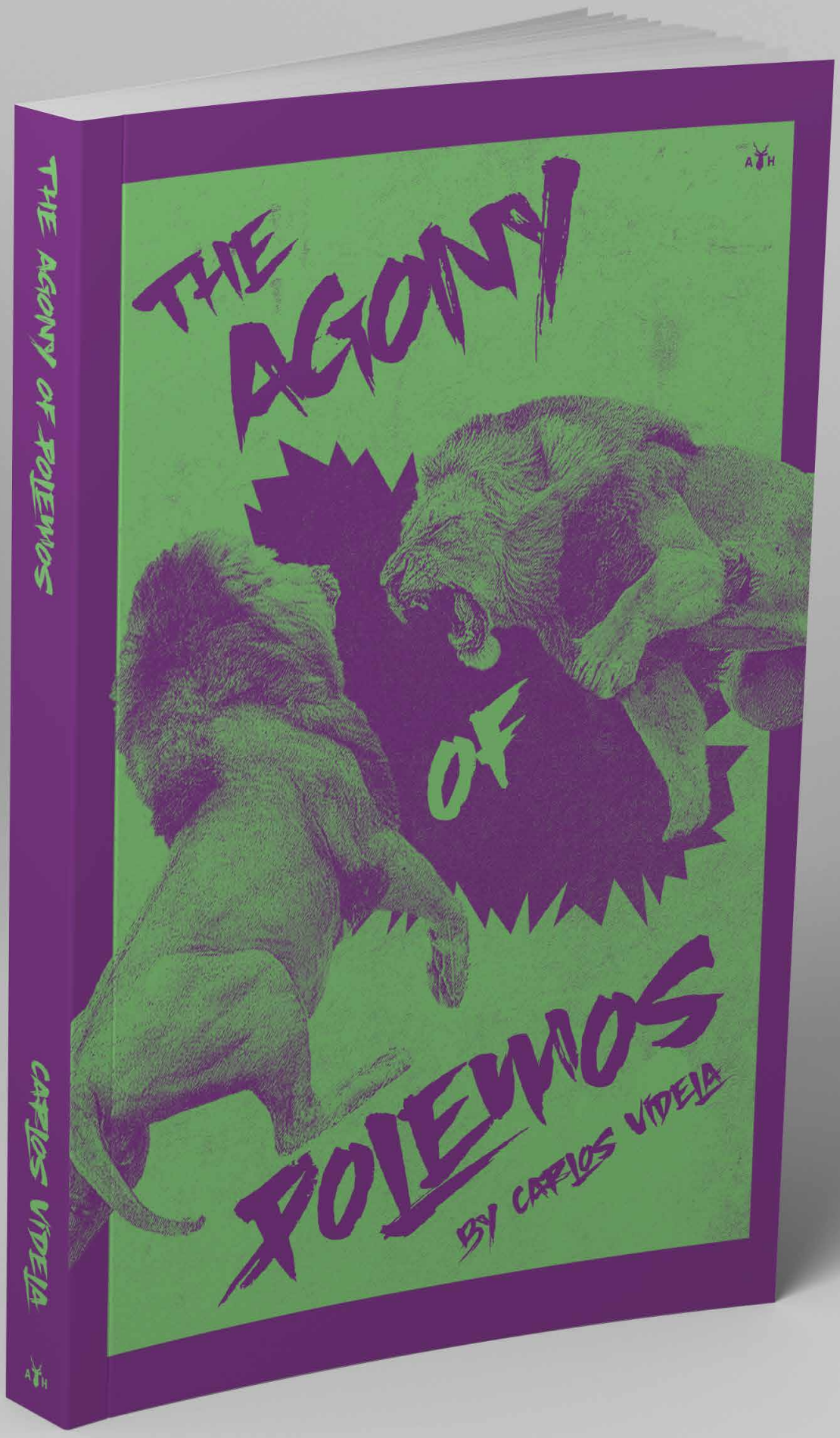

worm. There hasn't been a repeat attempt. Come here Silve, please."

Ceasing his pacing, the margrave was standing before a long table, on which an immense map was unfurled. The capital was placed to the south, with its port a few leagues away, and connected by a road and railway. Occupying the whole eastern part was the mountain, with its contours carefully marked, and with dotted lines describing the paths and altitudes of the principle summits and passes. In the centre lay a vast plain, seeded with towns and hamlets marked with towers. It was the beating heart of the country. It was also its field of honour, and the sanctuary of its memories. The great part of the decisive battles the margraves had faced in defence of their city had all been fought on this plain. To the west and north-west, at last, was the great forest, and to the north, the river, and the fort of Sépharée. Three margraves had hunched over this very map, which dated back a hundred years, though to which had recently been added - this time by the hand of Welf the Third - tracks of red and blue asterisks which trailed out from the capital and designated railways and telegraph lines. Now, the margrave had crossed and hatched out various parts of the map in black pencil. He explained:

"The railways to the north, south and west are cut. No trains have arrived or left in six months. At the station the equipment is no longer maintained. The trains are out of commission. The telegraph lines are all gone, not that it would change anything if they weren't. There are no Morse operators left, either in the city or here at the castle. As for the port, the dockers stopped working and took over the harbour master's office. Their numbers have shrunk, but either way, the port is empty and there are no ships. There is no word from our embassies overseas, nor from any foreign port. One of our last fishing boats, which was seeking refuge with the Syrtes while being attacked by cannon-fire, saw the quarantine flag flying from their semaphore main-mast. Even from the plains there is nothing. We know nothing but what we learn from the north wind. Once it brought us the sounds of the church bells from the villages. Now, there is only silence. The outside world is mute, apparently as empty as the chambers of this castle. The ambassadors left when they learned of Myriam's departure. I do not blame them. They must have thought I would follow her. None of them took the time to inform me, save for my old friend the ambassador from the Republique des Vallées, who said something curious: "This is the end of the world of dreams..." I imagine he meant by this that the world no longer needs anything of us, not even our dreams. Perhaps it never needed anything from us? Or may it even have been us who dreamed that it was so? This is what we call the destiny of nations. By their illusions they fall..."

He paused a while, pensive. Then he bent over the map, and traced a circle around the city, encompassing the citadel and castle.

"This is what we are reduced to, Silve."

He then turned toward an immense display case, which occupied one of the room's four walls.

"And here are our last subjects."

The collection of puppets, for that was what the case held, was known throughout the whole world. Once a year, over a week, it was exhibited in the city museum. In the 1750's, Margrave Welf-Frédéric the Seventh had brought back its first pieces from Venice, where the doge Francesco Loredan, an illusion-master, had welcomed him as a guest of honour at the puppet theatre in the ducal palace. It was installed in the attic rooms, as was common in the Venice of the time. This occasion had been the source of successive margraves' passion for puppets, as a sort of counterpoint to power. No margrave since had evaded it. They had themselves designed costumes, sets, and faces. Margrave Welf the Third, in particular, had had a talent for scripts, and new plays were performed over the course of the exhibitions. The charm and originality of the little characters was in the fact that they were made, with an exquisite attention to detail, to resemble real people in the city from all walks of life, from the cardinal to the water carrier, from the margrave to the soldier, from the noble lady to the prostitute. The people were delighted to recognise themselves. Once a year, at Christmas, the margrave invited the best pupils from the city's schools, a hundred children from seven to thirteen years old, for a puppet show followed by a sumptuous meal.

The previous Christmas was when it had all begun.

The children were quietly seated, and the margrave, according to custom, had given them a short welcoming speech, which had drawn unusually muted applause. The performance began. The story was that of an awkward and unlucky baron, persecuted by because he had dared to admire a beautiful and noble woman, who was also coveted by a powerful rival. In the second act, he was trans-

formed by the flick of a fairy's wand. He triumphed over all obstacles, he evaded all traps, he mocked his adversaries and the margrave gave him the beautiful girl, who fell into his arms with the blessing of the cardinal, and with the admiration of the people. The costumes were ravishing, the puppetry executed perfectly, the intrigue well-balanced, the whole thing edifying and well-conducted. It had been served by a clever script, full of humour and feeling. It fell completely flat. The young audience remained stoney, and those who seemed at first to enjoy themselves were quickly cowed by the silence of their classmates, as if they were afraid. When the curtain fell, the explosion happened. First there came a broadside of jeering, combining insults and blasphemies. Standing and stamping their feet on their armchairs, the children hurled obscenities of which nobody could have believed them capable. The stage was then stormed, and the set trampled, reduced to its wood and fabric, which the children continued to smash and shred in a fury. They stripped the puppets, tore off their limbs, and crushed the heads with their heels. When everything in the theatre had been destroyed, then, like a hurricane, they swept into the neighbouring dining room where the buffet had been waiting for them. One valet was pushed from a window, and the others fled. They left nothing of the plates and glasses but broken shards. The wall tapestries, depicting the great battles the city had fought, disappeared under a hail of cream, soup and syrup. Amidst the mob, there seemed to be no leader, only a terrifying rivalry. The guards were called. Youths leaped onto the backs of soldiers, gouging at their eyes with knives and forks. The men that restrained them were bitten until bloody. The children kicked and screamed. The soldiers found their uniforms ruined, buttons and lapels torn off, as they dragged the children, one by one, by their feet, arms and hair, into the yard, where they threw them onto the pavement. They sprang back up, threatening and cursing. Then, still howling, they descended the streets sloping down toward the city, watched with astonishment and fear. Then, all of a sudden, the riot ended, and each child made his way back to his home, almost as if nothing had happened at all. The father of one of these children, who had seen the horde from his windows, was waiting outside his house, and welcomed his ten-year-old son with a determined slap. As he prepared to deliver another, he met his son's eyes, and what he saw there terrified him. His raised hand fell to his side, and he meekly went indoors. As to the reasons for the riot, nothing could be drawn from the children. Not one would answer. They hid their secret with the wall of stubbornness which is typical to children, and which renders them more inscrutable than the deaf and mute madman. Perhaps they themselves did not know. A learned Jewish doctor in the city spoke of "unconscious origins of conduct intractable to conscious logic", and "of conflict transference and neurological symptoms caused by an excess of repression beneath the weight of social and moral expectations". Before this opinion from so high an authority, against which none could argue, the margrave demurred. Even worse, the Church also offered no comment, for fear of having only obscurantism to offer. The margrave ordered no punishments. A few days later the schools reopened, and teachers, by common agreement, avoided all mention of the incident, which they feared might rekindle the flames. Outwardly, nothing had changed, but those teachers who refused to deceive themselves now knew they had before them almost as many foes as friends. This was an omen, and others followed...

The margrave opened the case, and chose a puppet of himself, in the uniform of a colonel of the cavalry regiment. He made it play for a moment, at the end of its strings.

"There are moments where I ask myself," he said, "which is the real side of my life. Is it here, in this display case, among a people connected to me, who resemble me, and who have the same dreams I do? Or is it when I try to rule resigning myself to the truth? The real Welf the Third, Silve, is this one." The puppet, in his deft hands, saluted. "I've known it for some time. I hope that you will find him, when you come back, along with his loyal subjects. The other Welf the Third is an illusion. Just look at me."

"Come back? What do you mean?" asked Silve.

"I mean you are going to leave now, Monsieur le Colonel-Major. You are going to leave the city. Life is almost over here. Indeed, for the most part, it already is. The world has not stopped turning. The sun has not stopped rising. It is time to see outside what we know and do not know. First inside our own country, and then outside our borders. What is it like out there? What is the meaning of it all? It is undignified of this city to wait passively for the end without seeking a way out. This is the order I give you."

MAN'S WORLD

THE GREAT DEBATE

Getting a blowjob from your girlfriend: Is it gay?

Today's finest minds on the right debate our most pressing question

COMING SOON!

THE WHITE SWAN

FAISAL MARZIPAN

"But yourself, Monseigneur?"

"I wish I were not myself. I shall wait here, in my glass case. You are still young enough for hope, Silve. Leave as soon as possible. Free yourself from this disaster."

"Must I go alone?"

"It is not an escape. It is an expedition. Just as in the time of great discoveries. You are in command. Choose six companions. I approve your choice in advance."

"Why six?"

"Because I have in my stables seven healthy horses. That is all. I am giving you them. One piece of advice, Silve: Take the bishop. He will be more useful to you than to me. If I should die, I will make my own peace with God. We all now do. Take also my two young lieutenants, Tancréde and Bazin du Bourg. It would be pitiable if they stayed. I see them withering away where they stand, and then youth itself begins to repulse me, despite myself. It is nothing but an enigma and a hidden reproach to me. I now wish only to be surrounded by the old. Wilbur and Biron are both my age, and have as long left as I do. We will pretend to exist, we three, and it shall last as long as it lasts. We will amuse ourselves, and stay alive, perhaps until you return. Do come back, Silve. Please."

Silve looked at the margrave, and saw that between them was an ocean of uncertainty, and that it grew larger every moment. He took his leave.

"Take this letter," the Margrave said, handing him a sealed envelope. "You will deliver it to my daughter Myriam, to whom it is addressed. If you do not find her, then after a decent delay - that, I leave to your judgement - open it. It may have something to say to you, too. Come here, Silve."

They embraced one another awkwardly, trying to deny any emotion they felt. Just as he had promised, Silve woke the brigadier sleeping on the couch. Six chevrons of red wool on his sleeve indicated thirty years' service. A half-dozen decorations were sewn on his breast. Silve recognised the ribbon of the Croix du Mérite Militaire, the Medaille de Welf le Troisieme, the Croix pour Actes de Courage, as well as a faded black and gold ribbon which he recognised, after a moment's effort, as the Médaille d'Honneur d'Aulick-Frédéric, father of the current margrave, whom had died twenty-nine years previously. This ribbon was embellished with a silver bar bearing a name. Silve, approaching him, bent forward and read, as the brigadier puffed out his chest: 'Chechens'. It was followed by a date. While he had been a child at this time, he would had been old enough to have taken an interest, and yet he could not remember any campaign in recent history led against that most ancient tribe. The military annals mentioned no such campaign. The last to which they made any reference had been led by Margrave Aulick-Frédéric the Fifth, who had ultimately subjugated the warrior-people of the mountain after a final battle, almost two hundred and fifty years ago. The Chechens no longer existed. Some had been converted, or at least assimilated. The others, with their last emir, had emigrated, far beyond the mountain. The desert had swallowed them. Their language was no longer spoken. Their customs survived only in the ethnology department of the city university. Silve was, therefore, astonished.

"Explain this one to me, Brigadier. You fought the Chechens?"

"Fought is not the word, Monseiur le Colonel-Major. There were a few shots in the dusk, exchanged at a distance, we didn't come face-to-face."

"So you have seen them?"

"Shadows, Monsieur le Colonel-Major. Silhouettes on horseback, silhouettes carved on a mountaintop, just before the last pass."

"Did you chase them?"

"Those weren't our orders, Monsieur le Colonel-Major. Besides, they outnumbered us. Maybe a hundred..."

"And you?"

"A platoon of fifteen men."

"And were you decorated for that?"

"Yes. I didn't expect it. The affair really didn't deserve it. But Captain Kostrowitsky nominated all fifteen of us."

Silve started.

"Kostrowitsky! Capitaine Kostrowitsky? The poet?"

"I don't know if he was a poet, Monsieur le Colonel-Major, but it was he who led us. He seemed to be familiar with the Chechens. He told us about them that evening, at the camp, and certainly he spoke well. We would have listened to him for hours."

"He was making up stories."

The brigadier regarded him uncomprehendingly.

"Why would he have deceived simple soldiers like us? And why then did he leave again, alone, once we returned to the city? He asked the colonel

for permission to leave for personal reasons, but to me, he said: 'I'm going back'. He died out there, as sure as I am alive. Monsieur le Colonel-Major, you don't die for something you made up."

The mystery of the disappearance, thirty years previously, of Wilhelm Kostrowitsky had never been solved, and nobody had ever mentioned Chechens. His body was never found. It was doubtful that much effort had been made to find it, in the interest of avoiding official funerals, with fanfares and ponderous speeches. It was probably better that way. One must be wary of chasing poets beyond the mirrors behind which they have slipped. A stele bearing his statue had been raised in a group of birches in the city's public garden. Schoolchildren learned by heart the first four lines of one of his poems, which had been engraved there as an epitaph:

"An eagle from angels' heaven did fall
My memory there you'll see
Let flicker these lamps hereafter all
As you whisper a prayer for me..."

"What's your name, Brigadier?" asked Silve.

"Vassili, Monsieur le Colonel-Major. Brigadier Vassili Clément. Scout Squadron, Regiment of Cavalry."

"Very well, Vassili. Do you have a family?"

"I had one. I prefer not to talk about it."

"In that case, would you volunteer for a patrol? A long patrol. Fifteen days. A year. I will lead this patrol, and I have a duty to tell you that I don't know when we shall return."

"Perhaps never, Monsieur le Colonel-Major."

This did not appear to have concerned the brigadier. His green eyes gleamed with pleasure beneath the grey brushwood of his brows. Soldiering probably passed from father to son in his family. Stalwart, bluff and devoted... even his name, Vassili, just like that of Pikkendorf, or Wilbur, put him among the first race of men, who came from the north with Margrave Aulick the Second to carve out a fief in these lands.

Silve repeated himself:

"I said only that I did not know."

"As you will, Monsieur le Colonel-Major. Regardless, I am your man."

"Thank you. I am going to make sure you sleep tonight. You will need it soon. At dawn, you shall report to Cornet Bazin du Bourg. We leave in the evening."

Back in the lounge, still reading beneath his candle, Bazin du Bourg was waiting. Silve adjusted his question.

"If I asked you to come with me, voluntarily, on a mission far beyond the city, for an unknown time, would you be leaving anyone behind here who would regret your leaving?"

"Yes, but that would not be important. I should sooner ask myself whether I would leave behind anyone whom I myself would regret leaving."

"And would you?"

The young man was silent for a moment.

"If it is voluntary... The answer is no."

If there had been any hesitancy, it was quickly dissolved as the Colonel-Major revealed the objectives of the operation, and the importance it might have. Bazin listened eagerly. The horizon was suddenly widening.

"This might never end," he said. This thought seemed to lead his spirit into grand daydreams.

"We start at the beginning, if you please," Silve cut him off. "Come with me. We shall go and see the horses, and what equipment we can find in the castle stores. I am charging you with the material preparations. You have a blank cheque from His Serene Highness for any requisitions necessary. In all events, we are are bringing only what we can carry with our saddlebags, holsters and hooks. We shall be living off the land."

The stores in the castle's outbuildings were no longer guarded. Their heavy iron doors were secured with enormous locks, for which Major Wilbur brought the keys, threaded on a ring. He opened the first door, which moved with a terrible rasping.

"They all need greasing, but who will do it? After you leave, there'll be only fourteen of us at the castle."

This was not a reproach. The old major did not complain. He noted simply that in order to maintain any semblance of service it had been necessary to abandon some essential duties, such as the guarding of the citadel or that of the margrave's antechamber. How, with so few men, could the apparatus of power be sustained? It made him realise that the margrave was like a prince in exile, surrounded by a loyal few, determined to make him forget, by their illusions of protocol, that he was a sovereign dethroned. There was no despair from Wilbur. Like General Bertrand on St Helena, he had found his life's calling.

SMALL VICTORIES

What keeps us going when we feel so far from our goal?

Times of uncertainty and confusion weigh on the spirit. In these times it is the simplest and smallest of experiences that give us hope and courage to work for a brighter tomorrow.

The authors contained in this book have shared a little bit of themselves in each response to the "Small Victories" prompt for this year's contest. The writings in this book contain powerful images of simple beauty and humble courage. A handful of these works of prose and poetry have been selected for special honors as winners in respective categories. Many exceptional authors submitted excellent work, and it was a difficult task to restrict the book to only what is contained here.

Antelope Hill Publishing is proud to present the selected works of our second annual writing contest, entitled *Small Victories* sponsored by the White Art Collective, Will2Rise, and Media2Rise. The works contained in these pages are valuable contributions to the body of art and literature worthy of preservation in print for generations to come.

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SMALL VICTORIES

ANTELOPE HILL WRITING COMPETITION 2022

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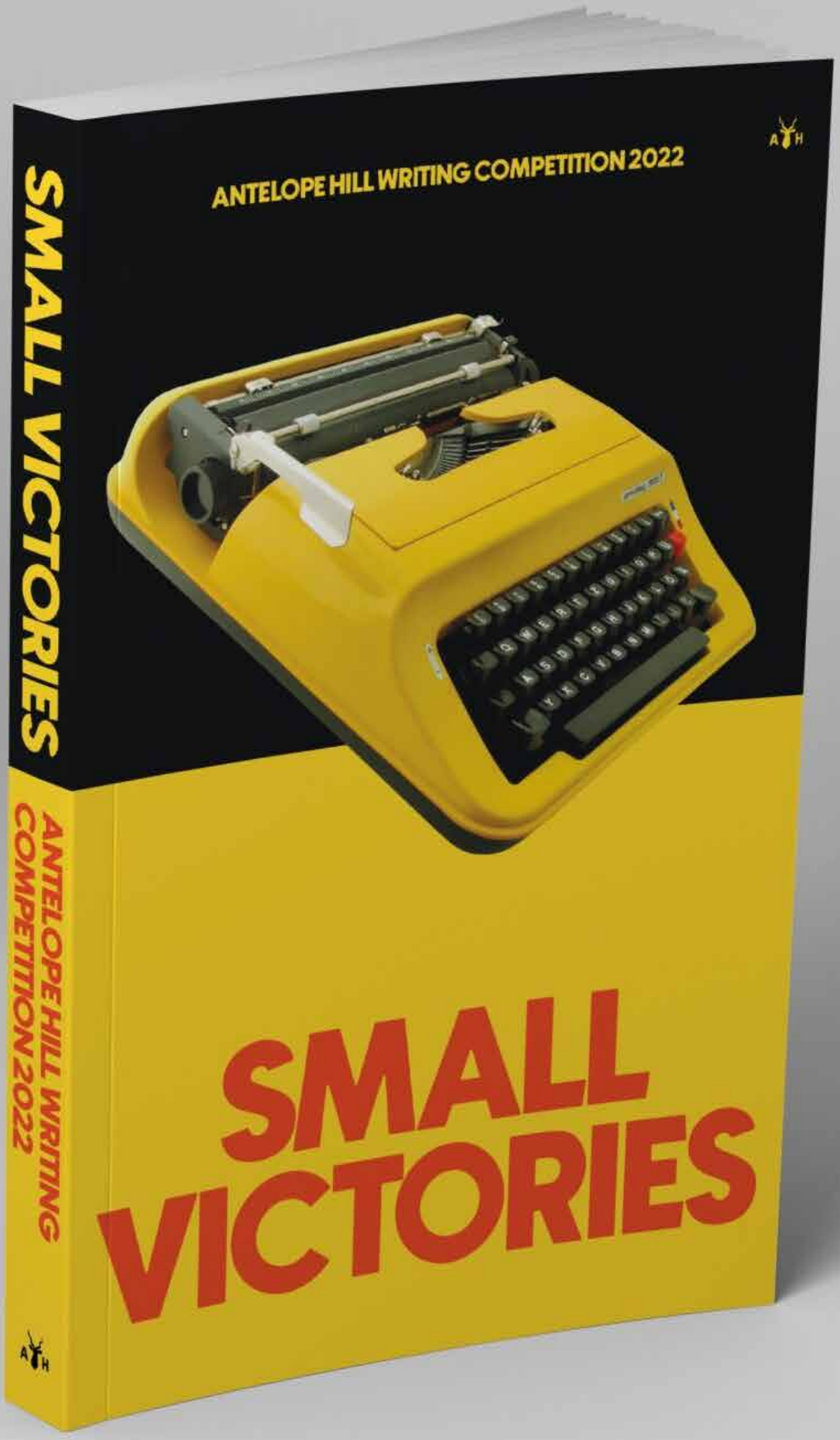

The first store visited was the armoury. The ledger mounted on the wall indicated that the carbines in rack F had been inspected six weeks previously. The ledger held no further entries. Some were a little flecked with rust, but the triggers and slides were in perfect order. They chose seven of the latest models, in service with the margrave's cavalry. In the absence of a quartermaster, Major Wilbur wrote the requisition himself and had the colonel-major sign it. This was absurd given the collapse of the state, but Wilbur held to this formality, as if a dead society might survive by the observation of posthumous rites. Silve signed the other requisitions at the saddlery, and at the uniform store. He chose as a uniform for his small troop the black tunic of the cavalry. It bore scarlet edging, and came with a fur-lined, black winter cape, so large that it protected both horse and rider from the elements. This uniform was well-known even in the remotest reaches of the country. Not long ago, the people had respected it. Though few in number, the margrave's cavalry had through long years embodied the arm of the state and its protection. Perhaps some would remember it, Silve hoped. But it was a double-edged sword. The power of the symbol could act in reverse. It was a risk he would have to run. Seven soft, cantled saddles and as many canvas tents completed their equipment. Finally, the dwindling garrison supplies were shared equally between the patrol and the remainder of the garrison itself. Each had a little tea, coffee, chocolate, soldier's biscuit, tobacco, dried meat, rice and water purification tablets, as well as a few flagons of gin, which they decanted into their flasks. Rats scurried between their legs.

"Last week," Wilbur noted phlegmatically, "they would not have been so bold. Their frontiers are moving. I shall have to move what's left to somewhere safe in the castle."

The good news was discovered in the stables. Whinnies of joy greeted them. The seven horses were superb specimens, full of life, stamping impatiently in their stalls, their hides brushed and glowing, their manes combed, and newly-shod. The racks were full of fodder, yet they could see that it was the last of it. A small, squat man, slant-eyed and dark-skinned, and marked by his uniform as a non-commissioned officer of the margrave's stable guard, was attacking one of the final bundles with a pitchfork.

"I know you," said Silve. "You are Abaï."

The man acknowledged him with a nod.

"And the last time we saw one another, it was a year ago, on a hunt. It was you who tracked the game. We killed three roe. We haven't hunted since."

The little man cracked a smile. He had white, pointed teeth, and a short, grey beard on his chin.

"You are alone here?" Abaï nodded once more.

"And it's you who works the horses? You groom them, care for them and feed them? You care greatly for them, that is plain. These beasts seem in excellent health."

Another smile.

"You know we are going to take them?" The smile faded, but this time the little man spoke:

"It is better that you take them. In two days, they will have nothing left to eat but the grass pushing between the flagstones in the courtyard."

He spoke well, but with the throaty accent and nasal tone typical of many Asian tribes. His had wandered, in the distant past, on the frontiers of races and faiths, finally to arrive, reduced to a half-dozen clans, and settle under cover of the great forest some fifty or hundred years before the founding of the city by the second margrave. Abaï was an Oumiate. Tireless hunters, fishers, foresters, riders and rangers, equally at ease in the trees or on the ground, the Oumiates had pledged allegiance to the margrave so long as they were left to live by their ways and, as they were few in number, and the surrounding country was sparsely populated, this arrangement had always worked well. Wild, but respectful of those who respected them, they were not averse to service. Old wars had seen Oumiate archers enlist under the margraves' banner. Outdoorsmen and trackers, close to Nature, knowing the ways of animals by instinct, gifted with a keen sense of right and wrong which often rendered them reliable. Men of their word, and of few words, they were a balancing element, a kind of imaginary force which people enjoyed shrouding in mystery, all the more for rarely seeing them. At one time, children adored them and played at being Oumiates in the public gardens. Their shaman's marionette had a proud place in the margrave's cabinet.

"What will you do now?" Asked Silve.

Abaï did not embarrass himself with formalities.

"Follow my horses. You'll need me."

Silve looked at him thoughtfully.

"Abaï is right," the old major interjected. "He knows other paths. Take him with you... Sign here, Monsieur le Colonel-Major, if you please. For the

horses. Afterwards we shall close the building. Administratively, the margrave's stables will no longer exist.

He surveyed the immense room, and its two rows of empty stalls, fifty apiece, decorated with bronze horse heads, trophy weapons, pennants taken from the enemy and full-length portraits of great stablemasters, among which whom there was a Pikkendorf in his mailcoat, his helm under his arm. Their steps echoed from the floor as if they were in an empty and lifeless cathedral. A few pieces of fodder and straw dotted the floor of the silo, at the back of the room.

"The rats will have nothing to nibble," observed Wilbur. "I suppose, Monsieur le Colonel-Major, you will also be taking Lieutenant Tancrède, the guard on the first gate?"

"Indeed."

"He is a cheery young man, full of spirit," the major continued, "it didn't seem so lonely with him. We shall miss him. The margrave was very attached to him. He reminded him of his lost son. And now, the margrave will lose him too..."

This time he could not keep the emotion from his voice. The prospect of patrolling the gloomy corridors and deserted battlements of the castle alone, without the hale and hearty presence of Tancrède at his side; of taking his meals without facing him in the mess; of reminiscing for nobody but himself, in the silence of his own mind; of hearing nobody, other than quavering old Biron, wishing him a good morning or evening in the tone of youth to which life seems eternal; to know, up there, that the margrave brooded in his library without the refuge of Tancrède's conversation; all these things weighed infinitely upon him, and he had at that moment realised it. Pulling himself together, he spoke:

"When are you leaving, Monsieur le Colonel?"

"Tomorrow, at dawn."

"Everything is ready. I will scavenge the mess supplies, and prepare you breakfast. It will not be said that you left without the castle's salute. That will always be so."

Returning to the guard post at the gate, Silve found Lieutenant Tancrède stamping his feet in the cold. He briefly gave him the news and his orders to be ready.

"As you command," said the young man simply, in his powerful voice, adding emphasis with a sharp click of his heels which seemed suddenly to banish the silence. Silve reflected that it was true. With Tancrède, all was life.

"Have you any regrets?" He asked him.

"Should I have any, Monsieur le Colonel?"

"I don't think so. The margrave himself recommended you to me, which is proof both of his esteem and his affection."

"Am I free to refuse?"

"You are not."

"Then I have no regrets." Tancrède concluded.

He added:

"But all the same, poor man... I am going to tell you something, Monsieur le Colonel-Major. When His Serene Highness would summon me, to play chess or chat, or share his supper, I felt that when I entered, an invisible presence would flee. It was Death. Death does not like me, Monsieur le Colonel."

"The margrave knows. He told me so. I'll see you in the morning."

The cathedral doors were not locked. In the lengthy course of the vandalism, the lock had been shattered. Silve pushed on the heavy panels and entered the building, waking several pairs of owls, which flitted between the pillars. On the high altar, a little red lamp flickered. Silve took a knee, and made a habitual sign of the cross. Taking in the absolute solitude which surrounded him, he calmly repeated the gesture, and focussed his thoughts on it. Nothing stirred in him. God seemed not to have any need for him. A boy was sleeping in a corner, curled on a pallet of blanketing. His face seemed familiar. He could not have been more than fourteen, and was cradling a sawn-off carbine in his arms as if it were a loving sister. The city armouries had been looted. The children had become feral, each the enemy of all. In his sleep, the boy wore a beatific smile, yet Silve was suspicious. As he stepped forward his eyes never left the boy, his hand resting on the butt of his pistol. The vestry door was double-bolted. He knocked. Bishop Osmond Van Beck opened it. A tall fire burned in the grate. The dry wood of a choir pew crackled in a flurry of sparks. It was hot.

"We are leaving, I suppose," said the bishop.

"Tomorrow. How did you know?"

"It was the only possibility. See, I already have my boots and pistols, and my pack is ready. God has left already."

Opening the high altar tabernacle, he took from it a steel ciborium in which lay several wafers.

"Did you know it is Sunday today? I gave Mass this morning, and blessed twenty wafers. I needn't

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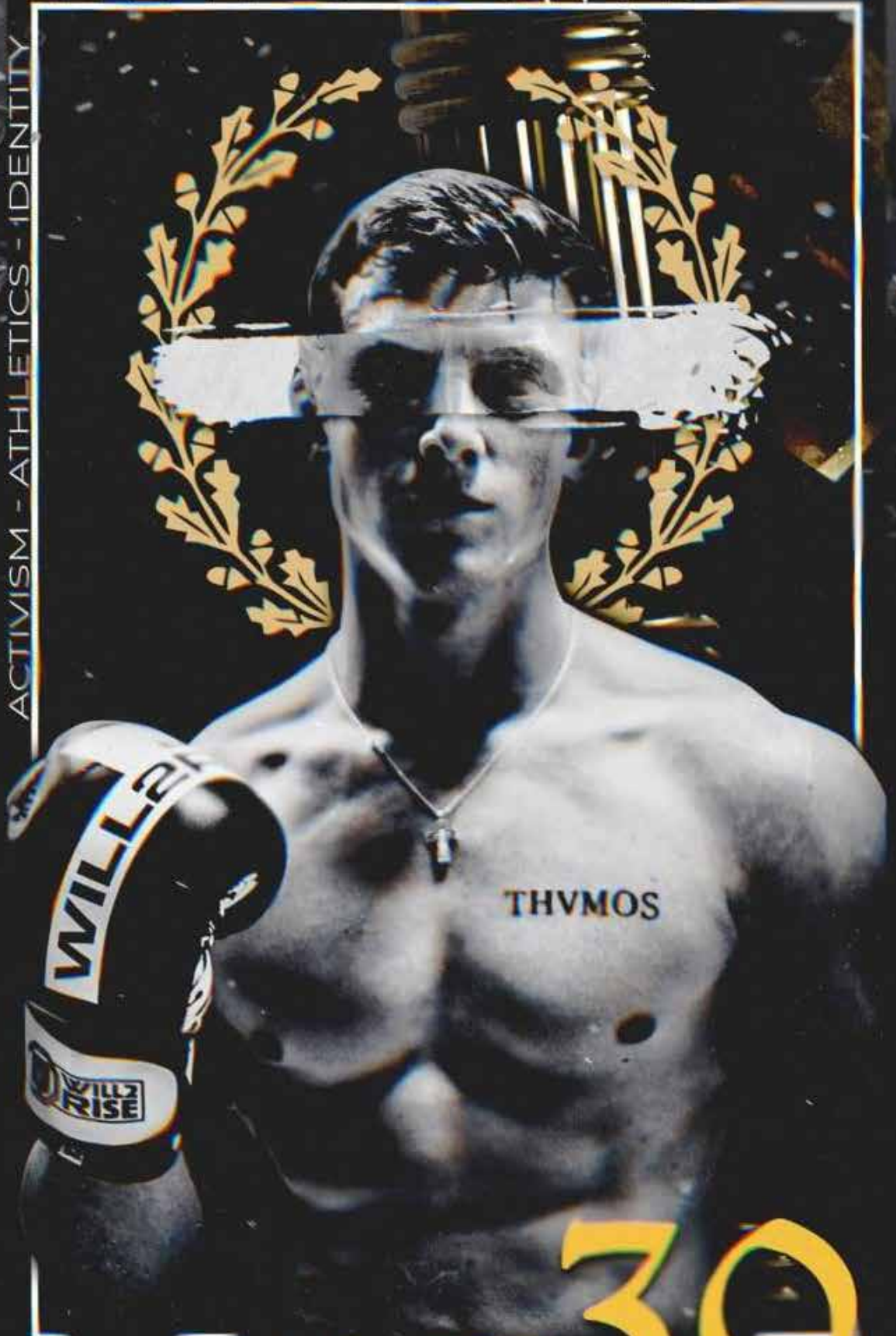

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have. Nobody came. We shall share them."

This they did. Then, the bishop blew out the lamp, and the Eternal Presence was extinguished. The boy turned in his sleep. He murmured: "God... Oh God..."

"And tomorrow, where are we gathering?" Demanded the bishop.

"From the castle, at dawn."

"The best hour! A good horse, a lungful of fresh air, and eternity..."

At Fédora's house, the light above the door was still lit, but the drawn curtains indicated that the lady had a visitor. Such was the custom in this part of the city. This made Silve de Pikkendorf smile a smile of genuine delight. So all was not yet dead in the city. He did not even need to knock. Fédora opened the door immediately.

"You are reckless," he said. "What if it had been someone else?"

"It couldn't have been. The others slink around. Only you dare stomp around in your boots in the middle of the night. You, and the other one there..."

"Has he been here long?"

"Three hours," said Fédora gaily, her eyes glowing with pleasure.

"My compliments, Monsieur. Who are you?"

"The young man had hastily arisen, reddening like a child while haphazardly knotting his tie and throwing on a uniform jacket, the collar of which displayed the insignia of the Military Athenaeum.

"Cadet Stanislas Vénier, Monsieur le Colonel-Major. I was just leaving."

Silve knew the Véniers, one of the great families of the northern province, of whom many had been mayors. One rarely saw them in the capital, but they educated their children there.

"Leaving, to go where?" Asked Silve.

"Home."

This response took Silve aback.

"Alone?"

The young man gave a snort of contempt.

"There are ten cadets left at the Athenaeum. I tried to gather them, but they are hiding, like rats."

"In that uniform," said Silve, "you won't get five leagues from the city. You'll be killed."

"I'm not changing it. Besides, Monsieur le Colonel-Major, I wouldn't be easy to kill. I am a shooting champion, a master of both sabre and epee, fourth dan in five Japanese martial arts, have a gold cross in night-fighting, and have already made my first kills."

"When was that?" Silve asked.

"Just now, on my way here. Three men attacked me. Two are dead, the other ran. It was my baptism in blood. A holy day!"

As he said this, and as if to include her in his tale, he looked proudly at Fédora, who gazed intensely at the young man with an undisguised admiration. The fight could not have been the only baptism of the evening. Silve saw that the cadet Stanislas Vénier had just made quite the entry into life, and one entirely at odds with the times.

"How old are you, cadet?" He asked him.

"Fifteen and eleven months, Monsieur le Colonel-Major."

The boy was a good six feet tall, with broad shoulders and the long, powerful arms of a cavalryman, as well as a mane of golden curls. Silve was quickly warming to him. Six men, he had already. This one would be the seventh. There was a moment of silence.

"Do you read Kostrowitsky?" Silve finally asked.

The question surprised the young man.

"Um... of course... a little."

He recited the famous epitaph engraved on the plinth in the public garden dedicated to the national poet:

"An eagle from angels' heaven did fall, my memory there you'll see..."

Silve interrupted him.

"Everyone knows that one. Something else?"

The boy hesitated. Silve pressed him.

"Well? The first verse that comes to mind?"

The boy spoke slowly, as if the words did not come easily:

"A woman, a rose no more..." He then faltered awkwardly. It was Fédora who continued:

"A woman, a rose no more
My thanks that the last is through
On my love I now close the door
Now you are one I never knew...

... That's it, isn't it? You've chosen well, Silve. Take him, he deserves it."

"So be it... Cadet Stanislas Vénier, I do indeed have something more to offer you than an unworthy and pointless death..."

He explained to him the situation in a few sentences:

"... Report to the castle, one hour before dawn."

***

When the seven met the following day, Major Wilbur had kept his promise. In the Ambassadors' Chamber, a buffet had been prepared which was nothing short of what had once been the margrave's customary hospitality: Genever shaken in crystal flagons, Champagne, Sirte caviar, reindeer sausage, dried beef, smoked trout, venison and hare pâtés, pickled onions, cakes of walnut and of pine cone, jam made from cranberries from the mountain, a cheese so hard that one needed an axe to crack it open, and fine slices of buckwheat bread, dark and dense, tasting of the forest. These last items represented more than mere bread and cheese, but a kind of national symbol by which both rich and poor might recognise their countrymen. There were white tablecloths and ceremonial crockery bearing the margrave's coat of arms. The torches were burning welcomingly, and great logs in the grate infused the room with a wonderful warmth. In the courtyard, equally well-lit, stood the seven horses. They were saddled and their broad flanks were covered by twin saddlebags stuffed with victuals and ammunition, as well as tent-rolls fixed to the cantles. The leather and buckles of their harnesses gleamed as if ready for the parade ground. An honour guard had been drawn up before the peristyle, arms at the ready. To form it, Wilbur had had to strip the walls and the gates, abandon the citadel, and empty the offices of their remaining secretaries, yet the little troop displayed a fierce pride. Everyone present, both of those leaving and of those remaining, was conscious of the charade. None was fooled by this brief moment of grandeur, that he was doing anything other than bravely playing at being himself. The three silver wings of the margraves on their black and gold banner floated over the ancient keep, illuminated by two bonfires whose flames were reflected in the clouds above, burning the last of the wood reserves. Tomorrow, almost nobody in the castle would stay warm, but Wilbur had promised; promised the garrison's salute to the riders.

The margrave, dressed in white with plates and cording, carried himself gravely, as if at a solemn hearing. Each of the seven men wore the black, scarlet-edged tunic of the Regiment of Cavalry, his cloak swept back and held by a golden chain around his collar. In better times, the young girls of the city were enraptured by this uniform. The elderly head huissier, Biron, officiated with a liturgical gravity, leading each rider in turn, and by rank, before the margrave, where he was presented by Major Wilbur.

"His Excellence the Comte Silve de Pikendorff, Colonel-Major, Military Governor of the City."

A click of heels. A handshake. His Serene Highness Welf the Third showed no emotion. He contented himself, as usual, with a few words, describing his total confidence in the Colonel-Major for the difficult task ahead. Silve replied, in the same manner, that this confidence honoured him, and that he was determined that he would not disappoint the margrave. Everything, ultimately, that need be said under such circumstances.

"His Lordship Monseigneur Osmond Van Beck, Bishop Co-adjutor to the City."

The bishop too had donned a cavalry uniform, keeping nothing but his crucifix and amethyst ring. A little ballet of convention played out, with the margrave genuflecting, and the prelate then guiding him back to his feet. The margrave spoke pleasantly, softening his formality without breaking it.

"Ah, Monseigneur. Look at you now. A soldier."

"With the permission of Your Serene Highness."

This was all. There was nothing else to say.

"Cornette Maxime Bazin du Bourg, of the Regiment of Artillery."

"You have been an exemplary aide-de-camp," said the margrave. "I will miss you. But we will meet again. You have your book, yes? The one you always carry."

"Kostrowitsky? Your Serene Highness, I..."

The margrave did not listen to the reply. The question was purely formal, a simple gesture of interest falling from the lips of a sovereign. It required no comment. Outside, it had begun to snow. With a heavy heart, the margrave thought of his empty city, of the destiny which eluded him, of the youth that was leaving him and from which he must separate himself, so that he might sink finally into solitude with nobody to hold him back. He tried with the very force of his soul not to let slip the mask of protocol.

"Lieutenant Richard Tancrède, of the Regiment of Cavalry."

"My God, how much he looks like him..." thought the margrave, his mind on his dead son. He held back the words which came to him, of

affection, of memories of conversation, of heartfelt complicity, which would have burst wide the gates of incontrollable emotion. He said simply:

"Lieutenant Tancrède."

"Your Highness."

"Brigadier Clément Vassili, of the scout squadron of the Regiment of Cavalry."

"Ah, there you are, old Vassili." said the margrave. "You are departing, too?"

"And what a departure, Your Serene Highness!"

The old soldier's warmth made him smile, as did the way he seized the margrave's outstretched hand, and wrung it like a pump lever.

"Stable Guard First Class Abaï."

"Sergeant Abaï," corrected the margrave. "Please accept this in recognition of your promotion."

As he said this, he slipped into Abaï's hand a double-aulick of gold. Such was the custom. The Oumiate stuffed it into a pocket, wondering what the devil use it would be to him, once he returned to his forest.

Finally came Stanislas.

"Cadet Stanislas Vénier, of the Military Aethenaeum."

The cadet clicked his heels, straight as an arrow, chin held high; a perfect young machine.

"Since your mission will lead you northward, you will no doubt be seeing you father," said the margrave. "Give him my compliments. I esteem him greatly, and the immeasurable service which your family has always rendered the city."

No doubt... No doubt... There was no doubt he did not believe for a moment in this unlikely reunion, in the far depths of a province of which nothing was now known. The old Vénier must be dead, and long dead by now, murdered by brigands or crushed with all his own beneath the smoking ruins of his castle. Stanislas knew it too. He considered their fates dispassionately.

"Nothing will keep me from delivering your message, Your Serene Highness."

With that, it was over. Each had played his role. The margrave briefly sampled some slices of dark bread, praised the quality of the cheese, as was expected, and toasted with each of them while exchanging pleasantries. After this he retired, leaving his hosts to attack the buffet in earnest, and the event, which could previously almost have been mistaken for a garden party, changed immediately in nature. They realised they were hungry, and that such a spread would not be before them again for a long time. Perhaps never. They ate, their teeth now cutting through the pleasantries that had filled their mouths. Nobody spoke of their mission. In the grate, the fire dimmed. The bread-basket was empty. The candles went out, one by one. It had been necessary to cut them in order to fill the chandeliers. When the bottom of the last bottle had been bared, and when the last plate of nut cake had been shared, Silve gave the order to leave. With his stomach full, and his soul elsewhere, none had any further desire to linger.

In the courtyard, the armies of the dead and of the living saluted one another, and the falling snow seemed already to separate them: those who were staying, and those who were leaving. The silhouette of the margrave was cut for a brief instant behind a window on the first floor, then the curtains were closed, just as for weeks had been those of Myriam. Colonel-Major Silve de Pikkendorf shook the hand of Major Wilbur, noticing in doing so that it was ice-cold. He gave the order to mount. This command cascaded into a rush of familiar sounds; clicks, whinnies, boots and hooves scraping the flagstones, giving life one last time to the castle, before it was plunged indefinitely into silence and solitude.

The bonfires glowed still at the top of the ancient keep, lighting the banner of the margraves. It would not be long before they went out.

Seven riders left the city at dusk, toward the setting sun. They left through the west gate, which was no longer guarded. They held their heads high, for they had nothing to hide, in contrast to all those who had fled the city. They were not fleeing. There was no treason among them, and nor was there hope. They permitted themselves no illusions. Thus were they armed, hearts uncluttered and spirits scintillating coldly like crystal, for the journey which awaited them. They were going on the order of the margrave. By his order they had been set in motion, and the youngest of them, who was not yet sixteen, was humming a tune...

From the shadows beneath the vault of the gate, as the horses' hooves struck the paving sharply, a voice was raised:

"God keep you..."

It was the voice of a man. It expressed only weariness. No conviction seemed to drive it, and nothing in this invocation suggested the least confidence in God. After so many decades, so many centuries, had God exhausted Himself? Had Man begun to

bore God? The created or the creator, with which had it started? Nobody knew anymore. Nobody cared anymore. There remained only a habit containing the memory of an emotion long lost. It was audible in the voice of the trembling man.

"God keep you..." The man, a forgotten watchman of the Margravine Gendarmerie, took a pace forward under the vault, almost touching the chests of the beasts and the boots of their riders. The gleaming hides of the horses gave off a palpable heat, mingled with the odour of strong and healthy animals. One of the riders was breathing heavily, with a savage joy which left the man desolate as he stood, left behind. As he watched them leave, he sensed momentarily that with them was leaving Life itself.

"God keep you, until our return..." replied the leading rider, Colonel Silve de Pikkendorf.

Without a doubt, they would not return. Without a doubt, they would never return. Without a doubt also he knew it, and without a doubt each of the six others knew it also, down to the young man with blonde curls, who was not even sixteen and who gaily hummed a tune, tasting the frozen air of the falling night as if he were a gourmand. This was of an inexplicable prescience. It was of the same nature as the "rest in peace" with which the sleep of the dead has been rocked since the dawn of the sacred, and which has never been knowable.

Only the first rider had replied. The other six remained mute, focused on their puffing horses. They had nothing more to say to those they were leaving behind; nothing to gain from them, nothing to hear, nothing to guess of their feelings. Behind them they left nothing and no-one. The man for whom the Colonel-Major had spared a few words was nothing to them. They did not even glance at him. The man had only time to note the splendour of their mounts, and the richness of their harnesses, the quality of their dress, the cleanliness of their clothing, the way they held themselves high, the pride in their posture and, finally, the silver-butted carbines in their leather holsters, and the long black mantles, heavy drapes of fur stretching down to the rumps of the horses. The man lowered his gaze to his own person, and found himself to be dirty, small, ugly, pinched and starved. He searched in the depths of his heart for the remnants of old malice and, having discovered it there, still ready to serve, he understood for a second time that with those leaving, went Life.

Colonel-Major Silve de Pikkendorf spurred his horse to a gallop along the straight road which led from the city, followed by his companions. Cadet Stanislas Vénier alone lingered, for a brisk about-face and a goodbye gesture, which could equally have been addressed to the silent city, or to the memory of Fédora which, already, was blurring. This gesture was but the product of youthful elan, nothing more. Not even a regret. Perhaps an insolence. Three more seconds, and he thought no more of it, rejoining the other riders at a gallop. His black mantle became confused with the night extending over all. His blonde curls whipped in the wind of the chase like a comet, which quickly in turn disappeared before the eyes of the man left behind.

The man contemplated the night, or perhaps the life which had vanished into it. The snow which was covering the ground and the road had erased the galloping of horses from the world of sound; the horses which had passed the vault of the gate and whose hooves had clacked upon the paving. The seven riders were gone also, and in an instant, into a thick silence. The man listened. The sound of distant and sporadic gunfire, over the horizon, had also died away. The signs of death were signs of life, and this was their essential function also. From the city no further sound could be heard; the crying baby, the young woman who sang, the bronze Bumblebee of the cathedral, the garrison bugle giving orders. The man could hear nothing at all.

It was the hour of the guard change for the watchmen of the gendarmerie. One watchman, alone, at the western gate, which was now unguarded only on paper. The man waited. Nobody came. One last time he turned toward the straight road, searching with his eyes for the blonde comet, praying that there still remained some movement in the night. If a hope is stretched enough, its final imperceptibility is rendered all the more powerfully precious. Finally, discouraged, chastened by eternity, he let his eyes fall back to the snowy ground. No prints marked it. Not the smallest trace of a hoofprint. There remained in the snow not the faintest trace of the passing of the seven riders.

The watchman, in absolute solitude, walked to the cemetery, and lay down in a tomb.

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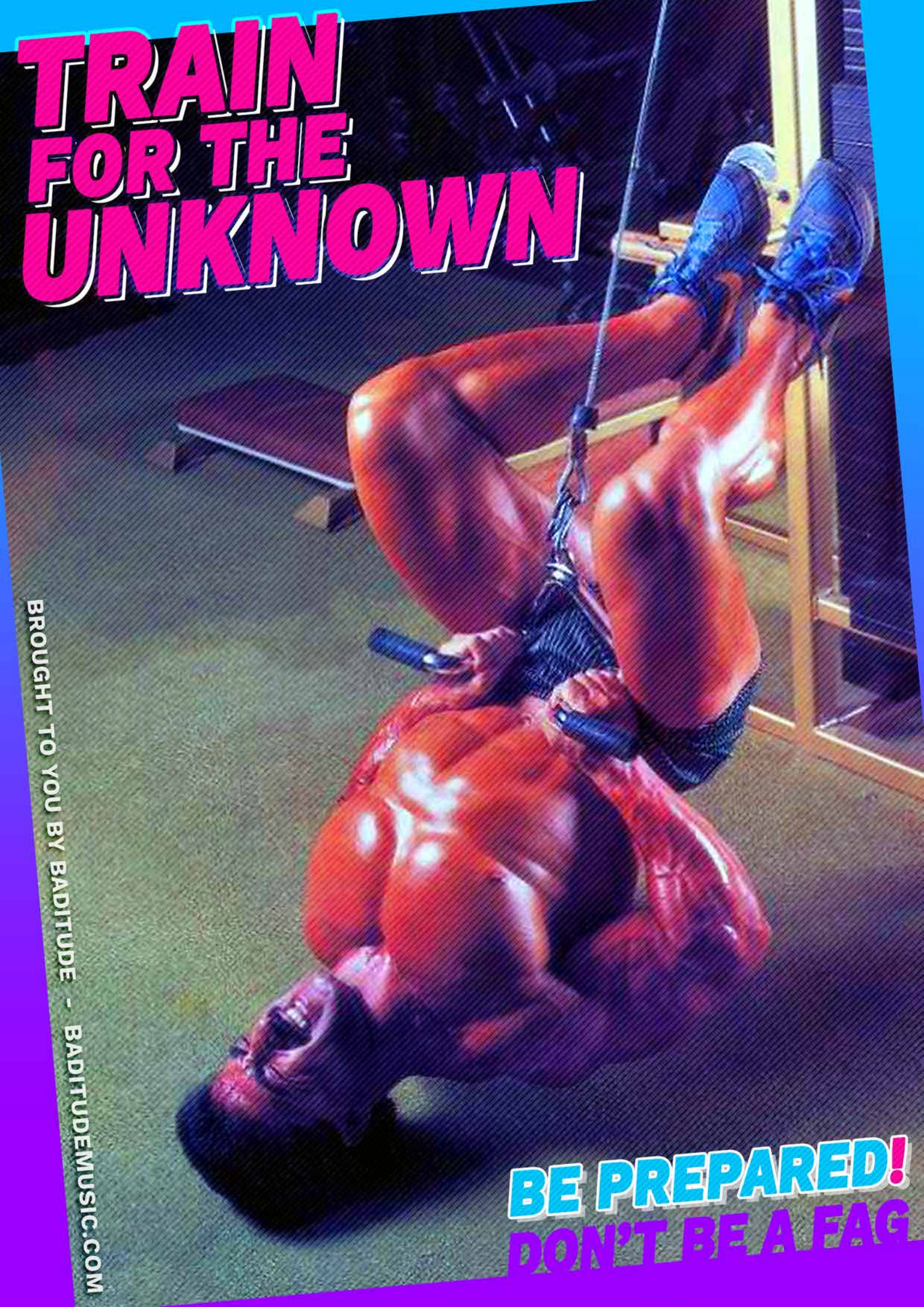

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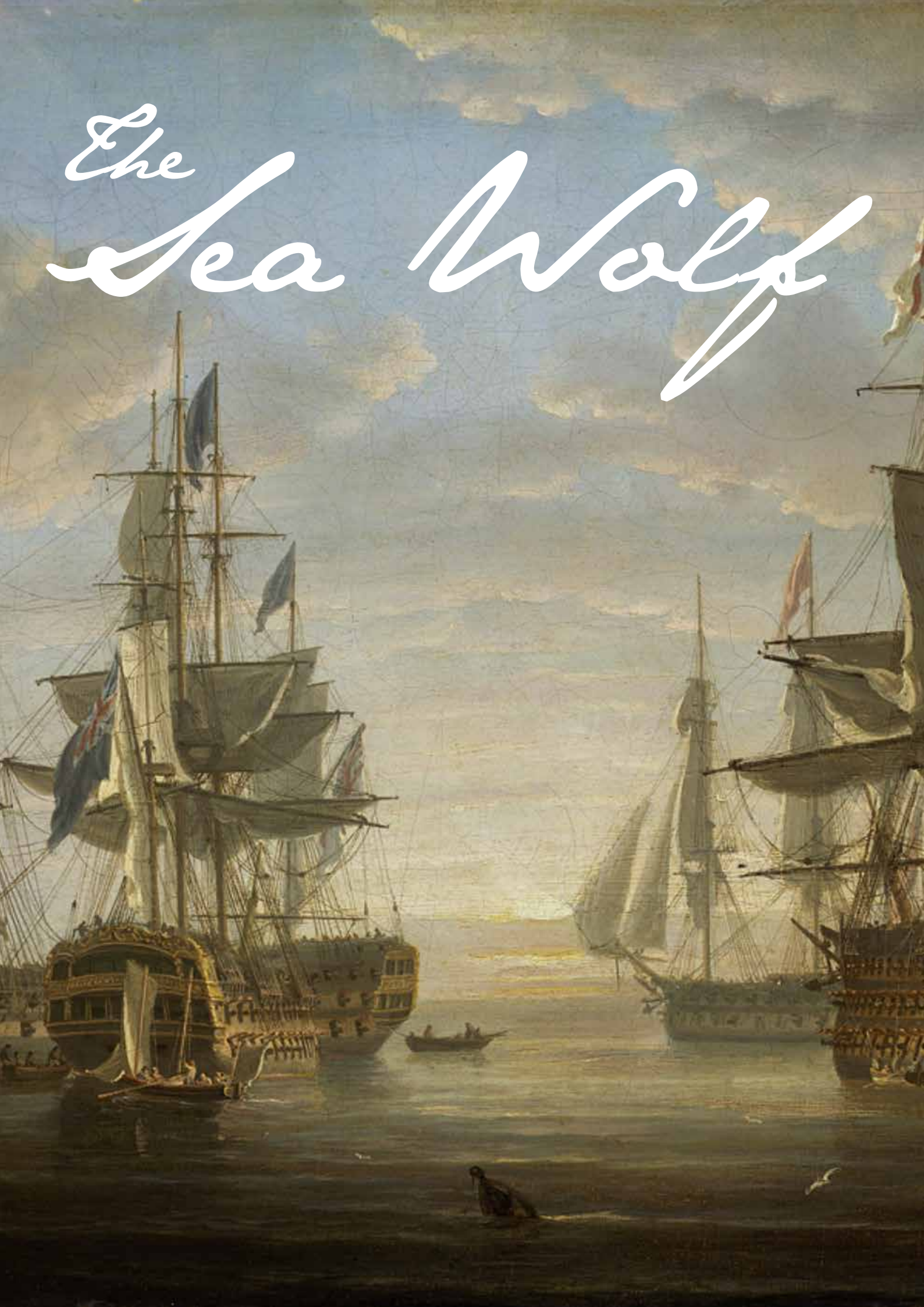


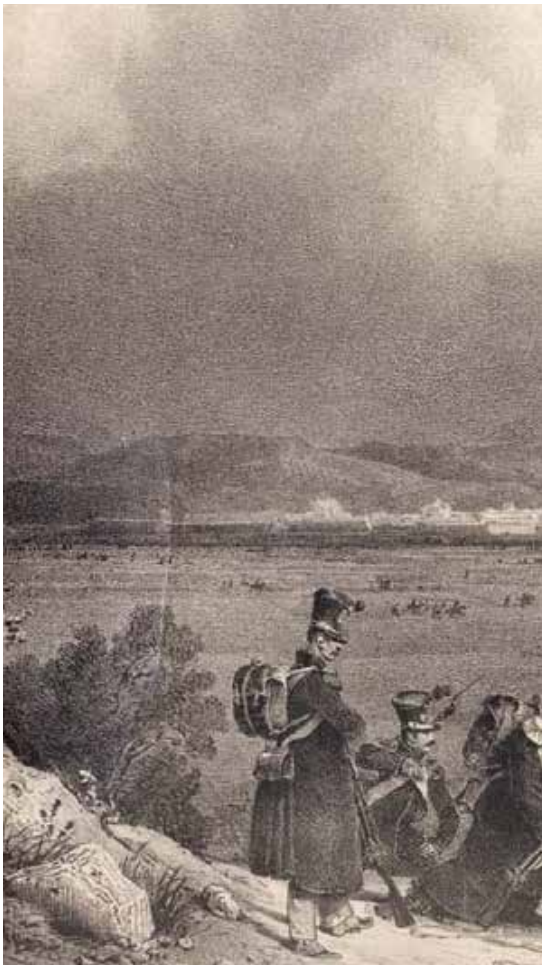
History

history

by **DAN SIMONS**

PART TWO of the incredible story of Thomas Cochrane

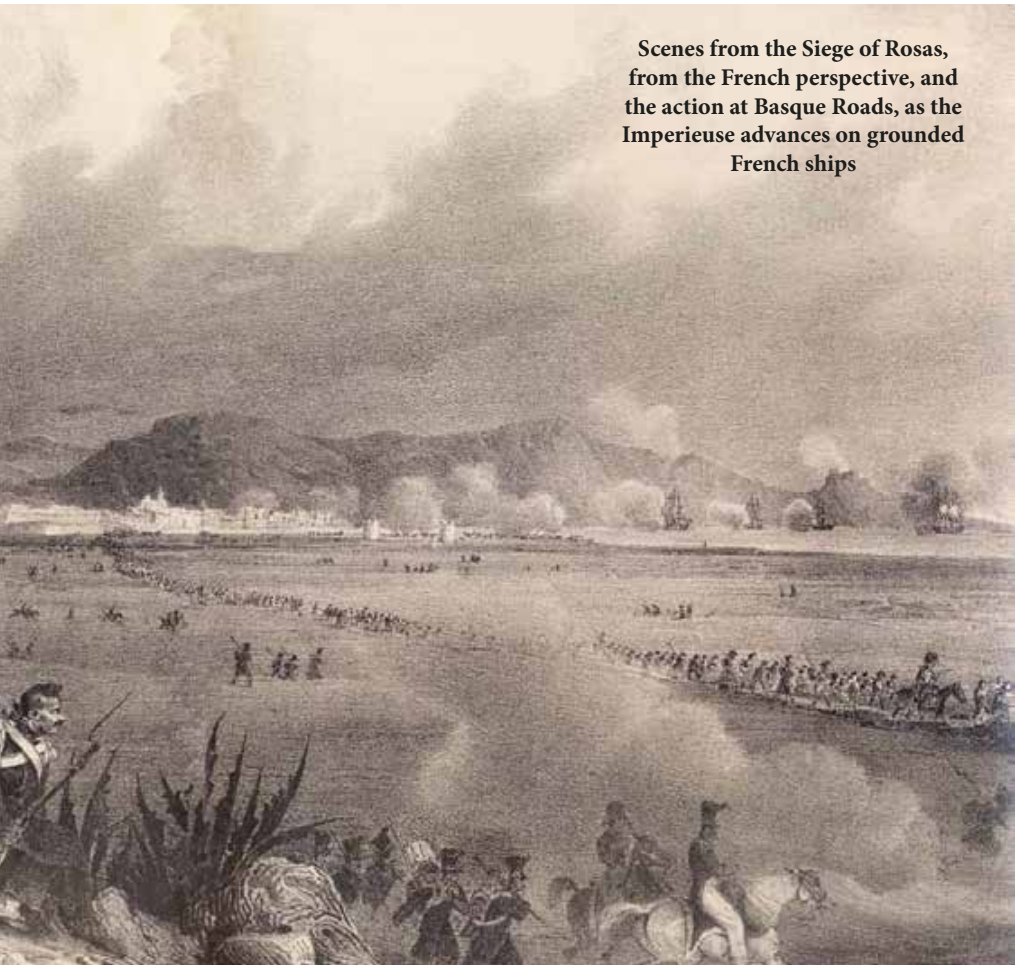
"Somehow, he knew it would not be long until he was out 'frog-hunting' once more"



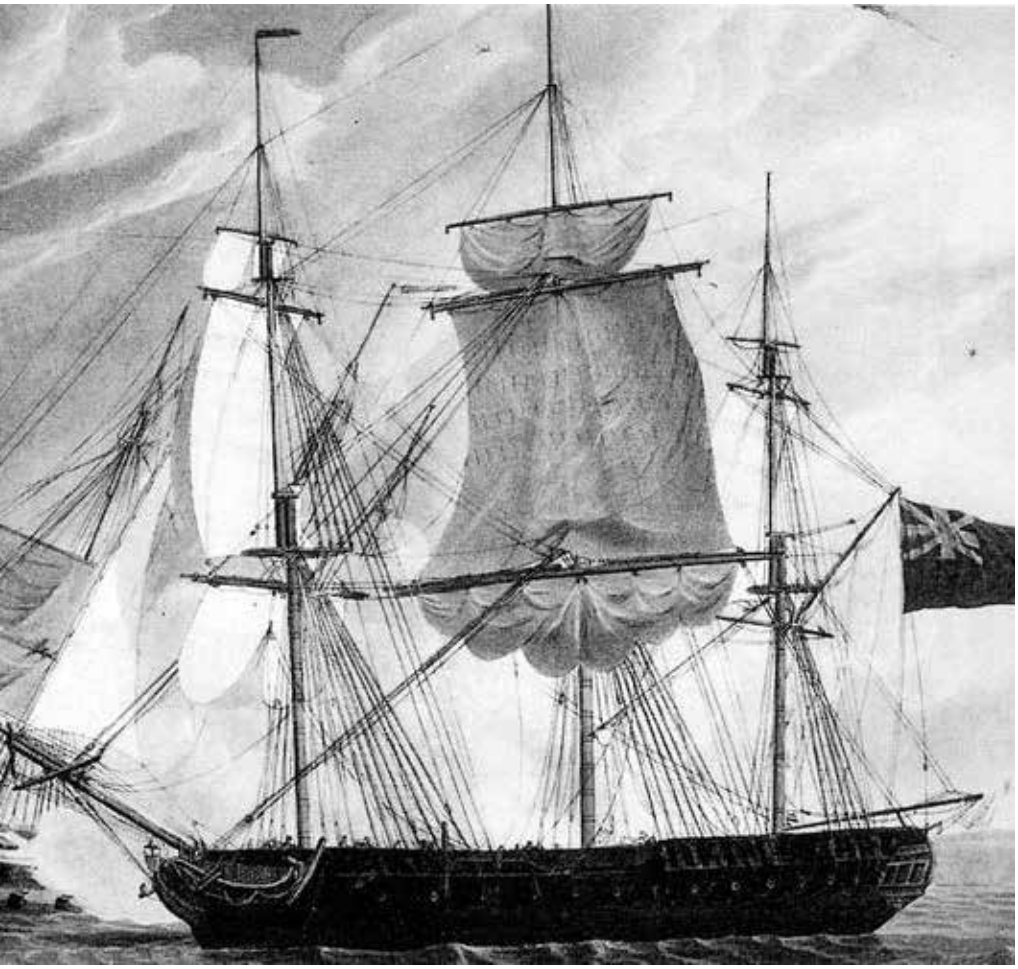
Third of July, 1801. HMS Speedy, the diminutive mosquito which had so gleefully bitten the backside of the Spanish and French Navy over the preceding thirteen months, was captured. Lord Cochrane's luck could not last forever, however impeccable his seamanship. For just over a year the eccentric Scottish aristocrat and his small, devoted crew had been rampaging around the Mediterranean, picking battles they had no right to win and taking prizes they had no right to take. Spanish and French ships fell with astonishing regularity. Cochrane's perpetual menace earned him the nickname El Diablo from the Spanish crews he so often tormented. But the Speedy had finally picked a fight she could not win, and though the tiny crew and their quite mad captain gave it their all – and nearly succeeded – they could not avoid capture. Lord Cochrane and his men were rowed aboard a warship named the Dessaix and the French breathed a sigh of relief. They had finally swatted the angry wasp. Cochrane offered his sword in surrender to his opposite number, but Captain Christy Pallière refused to receive it: "I will not accept the sword of an officer who has for so many hours struggled against impossibility". Even his enemies found him irresistible.

Cochrane and his men sailed on the Dessaix as prisoners; although His Lordship was given full hospitality as a guest in recognition of his status and great gallantry. He seemed to relish the chance to rest and turned his superior naval mind to observances of the French way. He noted several small techniques that the French used onboard which gave them slight advantages, and was sure to commit these to memory. Somehow, he knew it would not be long until he was out "frog-hunting" once more.

As they ambled back to Algeciras, a squadron of British warships was sighted. Pallière sought Cochrane's advice, at which he posited that he would be pleased to offer the same courtesies he had enjoyed when the French were duly captured. In short time, cannonballs began to tear through the living quarters of the Dessaix and battle was afoot. This would not be one that the British would win, and one of the warships, Hannibal, was eventually captured by the French. By some strange accident, the new crew had no French colours at hand, so hoisted the Union Jack upside down – a distress signal, and every available vessel was scrambled from nearby Gibraltar to come to their "assistance". The French, unsure of the scene unfolding before their eyes, enquired of Cochrane as to their next course of action. They could not quite believe that boat after boat would willingly row towards them, unarmed. Cochrane realised that he was observing a dramatic folly and tried to suggest Pallière fire a warning shot – in hope of alerting the well-mean-



Scenes from the Siege of Rosas, from the French perspective, and the action at Basque Roads, as the Imperieuse advances on grounded French ships

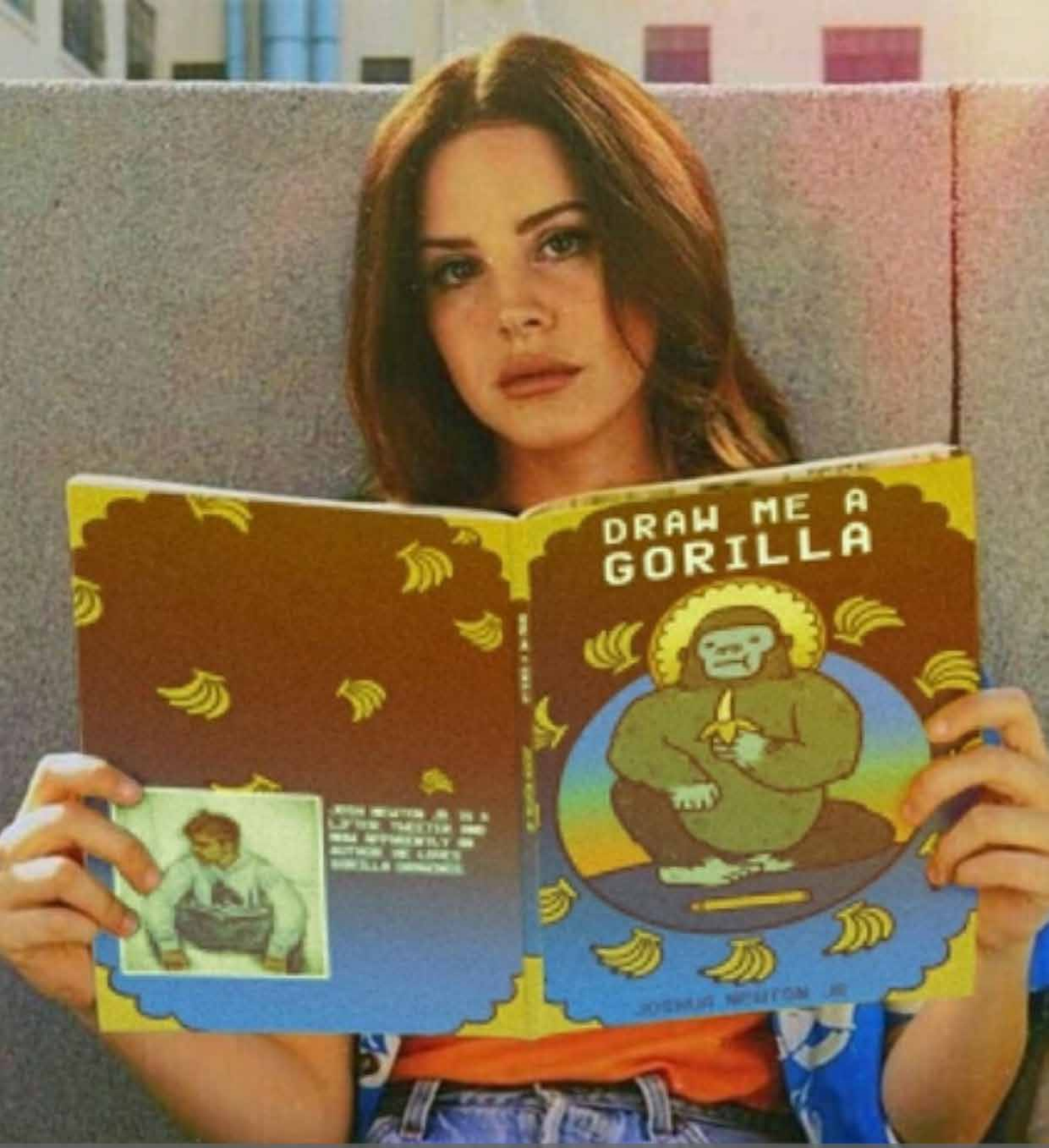


ing British crewmen to their impending capture, but the French captain instead chose to allow vessel after vessel to board the Hannibal, where they were captured as effortlessly as taking eggs from a nest. When it was finally realised back on land that Gibraltar was about to be entirely empty of seamen, a boat was sent under flag of truce to discuss prisoner exchange. The French refused, but Pallière, showing nobility of spirit, agreed to parole the young, aristocratic lieutenant. On reflection, this may prove one of the most profound mistakes of the entire Napoleonic wars. Lord Cochrane landed in Gibraltar a hero.

British naval custom decreed that a court martial must take place upon the loss of any boat, even one that had fought so valiantly to avoid capture. A jury of Cochrane's peers deliberated on whether he should face charges, but there were none to answer. He was exonerated, reputation entirely intact – if anything, enhanced. Few at home in England did not have at least a passing knowledge of the dashing lieutenant and his devil-may-care approach to terrorising the French and Spaniards.

On the same day he finally received his long-awaited promotion to post-captain for his astonishing leadership in the capture of El Gamo (see part I of the story), but the animosity he had willingly fostered with Lord St Vincent, First Naval Lord and his old adversary, would plague his career once more.

Despite the audacious raid on El Gamo being almost two years prior, his promotion was not backdated, and he fell to the bottom of the waiting list for a ship to command (The Speedy, after its capture, was donated to the Papal



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Navy. This was mainly as a tribute to the Pope but must also be seen as an admission that nobody but Thomas Cochrane – certainly no French captain – could have made so insignificant a ship into such a devastating weapon). Cochrane's family, including his war hero uncle Alexander, lobbied the stubborn St Vincent for a new command for the brash young Thomas. None was forthcoming. The more pressure was placed on him, the more he dug in. On being told that he "must" give Cochrane a ship, the crotchety old man shot back, "The First Lord of the Admiralty knows no must!" Cochrane attempted to solve matters himself by publicly alluding to the rumour that St Vincent had sat idly by whilst Nelson did all the real dirty work at the Battle of St Vincent (from which he took his peerage). As a public relations exercise it was delightfully scandalous and set society tongues wagging. As a serious attempt at ingratiating himself with the admiralty, it was career suicide.

The more that one reads about Cochrane, the more one wonders what he prized more: his career or the satisfaction he took in irking those he disliked. Things came to a head when Cochrane caught a carriage to London and demanded an audience with the First Naval Lord. St Vincent flatly refused to see him for several days and Cochrane was forced to gamble with the only mechanism he had remaining: he threatened to resign. Whilst St Vincent was stubborn and grave, he was not stupid. He knew that this famous young captain had caught the public imagination and foresaw the uproar if he allowed him to leave the service. Not short of a trick himself, St Vincent finally offered Cochrane a ship, which he told him awaited the young lord in the shipyard at Plymouth. Cochrane set off for the southwest immediately, overjoyed to have finally forced the admiralty into submission. Arriving at Plymouth, he could scarcely believe his eyes. HMS Arab, his promised command, was little more than a tub with sails. Speed, it had none, and all the manoeuvrability of a particularly fat bullock. Cochrane exclaimed that "it will sail like a haystack!". St Vincent had once more bested him.

What followed was a period of exile. Ordered north to protect the Shetland fleet – which didn't actually exist – Cochrane was essentially decommissioned. His career, so recently full of promise and glory, was almost extinguished. Fourteen long months he patrolled leaden-grey seas. Doomed, like the ancient mariner, to float aimlessly, ruminating on the mistakes which led to his downfall. As so often happens with the lives of the truly heroic, a simple change of fortune saved him. To be specific, a General Election, a new Tory government – and with them a new First Lord of the Admiralty. St Vincent was out, Viscount Melville was in. And so was Thomas Cochrane. Recalled from purgatory, given command of a new ship, The Pallas, with 38 guns and 200 men, Cochrane had a complete reversal in his luck. By all contemporary accounts, Melville was corrupt and entirely for sale, but he recognised that the navy needed captains, good ones, and one of its very best was guarding the Outer Hebrides for no ostensible reason. Cochrane was back in the fray, and within a month was patrolling the Azores. He had lost time to make up and there was only one thing on his mind: mayhem.

Almost immediately he resumed where he left off. Four prizes were taken by the end of March, including La Fortuna which was worth around £132,000. In fact, it was worth so much that Cochrane allowed the Spanish captain and the cargo-manager to keep 5000 doubloons for themselves. Such beneficence was completely unprecedented.

Just as he had resumed his plundering, he found himself in a familiar situation from the Speedy days – three French warships were sighted on the horizon and once more Cochrane and his men found themselves hopelessly outnumbered and outgunned. There was only one hope, to make a run for it. To complicate matters, a gale was rising and the seas shook with violence. Ever the master seaman, Cochrane realised that the tempest offered him an advantage. The French could not aim their guns in the tumult, and this offered them chance to formulate a plan. His men, highly trained and believing completely in their superhuman captain, knew exactly what to do. With the French gaining on them, Cochrane issued the order for his men to furl their sales completely and at the same moment turn the ship hard over. The effect was something like applying a handbrake when driving 90 miles an hour. The astounded French could only watch, open-mouthed, as the British vessel stopped dead in the waves, and the winds carried them miles further, helpless to stop or change course. Although the danger of capture had passed, the very real danger of shipwreck was still present. Conventional wisdom decreed that turning broadside to the waves would lead to a capsize but Cochrane's calculated gamble paid off. Without sails for the wind to catch, and although the boat rumbled angrily as it was flung across the trough of the wave, it did not capsize. The crew then tacked away gently, in the

"He yet again resorted to the kind of ruse that sounds utterly fantastical and improbable, and could easily be dismissed as fantasy"

opposite direction to the French. As we have seen in earlier escapades, such daring was only possible in the conditions Cochrane fostered aboard his ships. This was an entirely different crew to The Speedy, yet just like his former charges they trusted their lives to him unquestioningly and would do whatever he asked, satisfied in the knowledge that he knew best. When it came to matters of societal authority and deference, he was irrational and prone to egregious error. When the subject was nautical, there was simply no mind to compare.

On returning from dull escorting duties across the North Atlantic, Cochrane arrived home to learn that Nelson had died at the Battle of Trafalgar on October 21st, 1805. The British victory fundamentally changed the dynamic of the naval conflict for the rest of the war, but the French were still active on the seas, and he received new orders to meet Admiral Thornburgh and harass enemy shipping around the French coast. If there was one talent Cochrane possessed above all others as a captain, it was a gift for harassing the French.

The Pallas stalked the French coast. Where other British officers kept their distance from the heavily defended coastline, Lord Cochrane sought the danger it presented. At the mouth of the Garonne river, he was made aware of French corvettes sheltering further upstream. On French territory, protected by a huge guard ship and the heavy guns from two forts, the corvettes and their captains reasonably assumed their safety. They did not know a wolf was prowling. Cochrane directed a galley manned by 180 marines to venture upriver. He stayed onboard the Pallas, guarding the mouth of the river, but the risk was huge for all involved. Raiding this far into French territory, over a tricky and unpredictable estuary where at any time he could be penned in by the arrival of huge French warships behind him, the danger was palpable. Around 3am the dispatched crew reached the guardship, boarded it to the utter shock of the few Frenchmen onboard, and turned the guns on the very corvettes it was supposed to be protecting. Both were destroyed. Back at the estuary, Cochrane and his skeleton crew grew impatient and nervy. Sure enough, as it so often did, the worst outcome occurred. French sails were spotted on the approach. With most of his men aboard the galley, Cochrane couldn't hope to fight. He yet again resorted to the kind of ruse that sounds utterly fantastical and improbable, and could easily be dismissed as fantasy, were there not multiple written testimonies to its occurrence.

Using a long length of thin yarn, he ordered the lithest of the remaining crew up the rigging to tie the sails. When the French warships approached, he cut the yarn. All the sails unfurled at once, a manoeuvre it would only be possible to carry out with a full crew. The corvettes, falling for the trick, fled, and The Pallas, taking the bluff through to the very last, pursued them firing angry shots. There were only enough British sailors aboard to man the two forward guns, but this proved enough. Both French craft ran aground in desperation and were easily destroyed by the barely manned British warship and her two functioning guns.

Cochrane's men took possession of the guardship, Tapageuse, and after reuniting with Pallas they went for a spot of raiding along the French coast. Here he pioneered the commando raid, sending his men ashore on the galley to storm French signals, ports and town and then disappear as quickly as they had appeared.

On one such raid he learned of the whereabouts of the Minerve, a huge ship, with 40 guns and twice the size of the Pallas. It was a regular scourge of the British naval efforts. To further enhance the odds, Minerve was sheltering under the protection of the huge battery guns of Aix. An attack was unthinkable – to most. Naturally, Thomas Cochrane could not resist; astounding odds never bothered him much. He ordered the Pallas to sail straight down the Aix channel towards the ship and its defensive nest of guns. The French soldiers and sailors in the battery observed this mid-sized ship sailing towards its cer-

tain doom with incredulity. It was only when Pallas destroyed a brig that they were stung into action, and by that point the ship was in the process of destroying a second one. The Pallas came alongside the Minerve and let forth a broadside. In the confusion, the two ships collided, but Cochrane's precisely drilled men recovered their senses first and let fly another round. The captain of the Minerve was observed standing on deck, amid hell and chaos, admiringly raising his hat to Cochrane in disbelief. The Minerve was out of action but Pallas was not faring much better, and with French reinforcements approaching things looked bleak. Fortunately for Cochrane HMS Kingfisher was within signalling distance and came to the rescue. The French reinforcements outgunned and outnumbered the two British ships, but seemingly the French had seen quite enough of this mad Captain for one day, and sailed past them both and to the aid of the stricken Minerve.

Cochrane had taken the fight directly to the French, on their home soil, in their own waters and down their own rivers. He returned home to adulation and acclaim. With Nelson dead, the country needed a new hero and Cochrane seemed the logical choice. Even Napoleon was in grudging awe.

With new glory came new prestige. He was given command of a ship double the size of the Pallas, HMS Imperieuse, with 38 guns and 300 men. He arranged for most of his former crew to be transferred over and, after a rocky start where the ship was launched without provision, he soon began harassing the French again. This time serving under Admiral Collingwood, an enlightened leader who had abolished flogging aboard his ships. The two worked in an environment of mutual respect. Cochrane found the taking of prizes as easy as ever, almost too easy. Bigger challenges would soon present themselves.

June 1808. The Spanish had revolted against the French occupation, meaning British troops on the ground in the peninsular could count on the support of the locals. At sea, Cochrane did his bit to encourage relations by sailing past coastal towns flying both British and Spanish colours. At Algeciras and Cartagena the locals came to clifftop and beach to cheer him. On arriving at Barcelona, Imperieuse taunted the French battery by floating into cannon range and then floating out when shots were fired. He noticed that the entire French military presence was supplied by a single coastal road. Realising that if he could hamper this supply route, he could impose a delay of weeks if not months on the French, he formed a plan.

In a small Catalonian town, Cochrane and his men landed, blew up the road and threw all the town's big guns from the clifftop – which he sailed around to collect the following morning. As the French troops stationed nearby rushed over to fight, Cochrane and his men re-boarded, sailed over to where the troops had come from, stole their undefended guns and blew up the road in several places. This action and ones like it were repeated several times along the coast road and the effect upon French supplies and morale was catastrophic. For the British it was effortless and incredibly low-risk. Cochrane, highly amused by his own cunning, recorded in his diaries about the "wonderful amount of terrorism" a small frigate was able to bestow upon the entire French army. Sir Walter Scott noted how Cochrane's activities kept the entire coast in a sense of tension and diverted two thousand French troops from Figeuras to try and (unsuccessfully) deal with him. Any French military activity within range of his guns had completely ceased.

Cochrane's inventiveness showed no signs of abating. On another occasion he had all the ship's boys dress as marines and stage a false landing. As the French cavalry, posted explicitly to tackle Cochrane's reign of terror, hurried over to engage the "marines", Cochrane calmly sailed to the French base, disembarked his real marines, and took the garrison – guns and all – without a fight. On realising their mistake, the cavalry turned tail but Cochrane was waiting offshore for them and decimated them with the Imperieuse's pounding guns.

Later, anchoring off the coast of the town of Rosas, Cochrane learned from a colleague that a column of some six thousand French troops and possibly double that number of Italians was approaching Catalonia. The fort adjacent to the town, Fort Trinidad, had been overlooked by two other British officers as unworthy of making a stand. Cochrane observed it with his own, keener eye and realise there was huge defensive potential. It had been partially breached by the French guns, but he calculated that they could do no further damage due to the angle of attack. A huge hole had been blown in the side of the Fort but this would be a dangerous entry point as it would place the attackers some 50 feet above ground, dangling perilously over rocky ground. Cochrane knew the potential for mischief and mayhem when it presented itself, and he welcomed them warmly. He and his men set to work.

Booby traps were rigged. He ordered a wooden

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structure built inside the hole in the fort, and then greased it with cooking sludge. Any Frenchman who stepped through would slide down, most likely to their death but certainly capture. One hundred years before the creation of barbed wire, Cochrane envisioned a very early prototype with ships chains and fishing hooks. He also ran explosives around the other walls of Fort Trinidad, so that when the inevitable retreat came they could send many Frogs to hell as they ran to the fort's inner sanctum. All that was left was to wait. Cochrane and his crew bunkered down.

The French arrived outside Rosas and sure enough began the siege. Four days of nerve-tingling tension as the cannonballs pounded. On one occasion the Spanish flag was knocked down and Cochrane jauntily walked outside the confines of the fort, bullets whipping overhead, to set it right. His men roared their approval. He later took a stone splinter through the roof of his mouth, but never complained despite the pain. Soon the town of Rosas fell, and the French offered Cochrane and his men in the fort terms of surrender. Twice they offered, and twice they were rebuffed. Nine days into the siege Cochrane awoke in the night, sensing danger. The French were coming.

As the disciplined columns pushed towards the fort, the men held their breath. The French breached through the hole and sure enough began sliding to their deaths. The few that made it across became entangled on the hooks and chains and were picked off with ease by riflemen. The relentless flow of men meant that those at the front had no chance. The slaughter continued unabated until the French decided to retreat and refocus their efforts on the town of Rosas instead. Cochrane signalled the Imperieuse, the Excellence and the Magnifique to commence bombardment of the town from the safety of the sea, while he had his men climb down the cliffs to the waiting galleys below. Cochrane was last to leave, sure to light the fuse to send the fort skyward. The rearguard action against unyielding odds was, as we have seen, nothing irregular for Lord Cochrane or his men, but it provided a huge propaganda boost for the Spanish armies and Cochrane became a national hero in Spain. In typical style, whilst remonstrating with the high command of the British Army to adopt his sea bombardment tactics on a grander scale to end the Peninsular campaign more quickly, his haughty tone and lack of deference annoyed those at the very top. No matter to him, but one cannot help the feeling that if he had showed the even the slightest attempt at humility then his status as national symbol may well have been cemented for the ages.

For sheer heroism, the actions of Cochrane at Rosas stand with General Wolfe in the Americas, Clive in India and Gordon at Khartoum in the pantheon of unspeakably brave British military actions. Unlike the others, he barely lost a man and went on to live a long life, full of adventure, scandal and intrigue. Over the two parts of this series, we have looked only at his career aboard ship rising from apprentice to captain. The apogee of his career came after, at the battle of Aix Roads where he proved himself - as if it needed proving - to be fearless, cunning and wholly imbued with self-belief. The stories of his brutally unfair court martialling, his fall from grace and framing in a Stock Exchange scandal where he served time in prison, his time as a Radical MP, his numerous inventions both naval and civilian, his re-emergence as a freedom fighter for Greece, Chile and Peru and his eventual redemption in the Royal Navy where he was finally made admiral – these are all tales for another time. Thomas Cochrane, 10th Earl of Dundonald, lived in one lifetime more than most would live in a hundred. Whilst Nelson is lauded, and rightfully so, as a British national hero, we should remember Lord Cochrane as every bit his equal. His disdain for danger, lust for adventure and his full-hearted humanity mark him out for greatness. He was an audacious innovator, an iconoclast and a military visionary. Truly beloved by his men in an age where many officers were loathed, he was respected by his enemies and all-too-briefly loved by his country.

In an age of crushing mediocrity and uniformity such as ours, we must look to men with such a spark to light the path for what we could become. There will be others, eventually, but there will never be another Sea Wolf.

Roger Corman: "Eerie, Engrossing"

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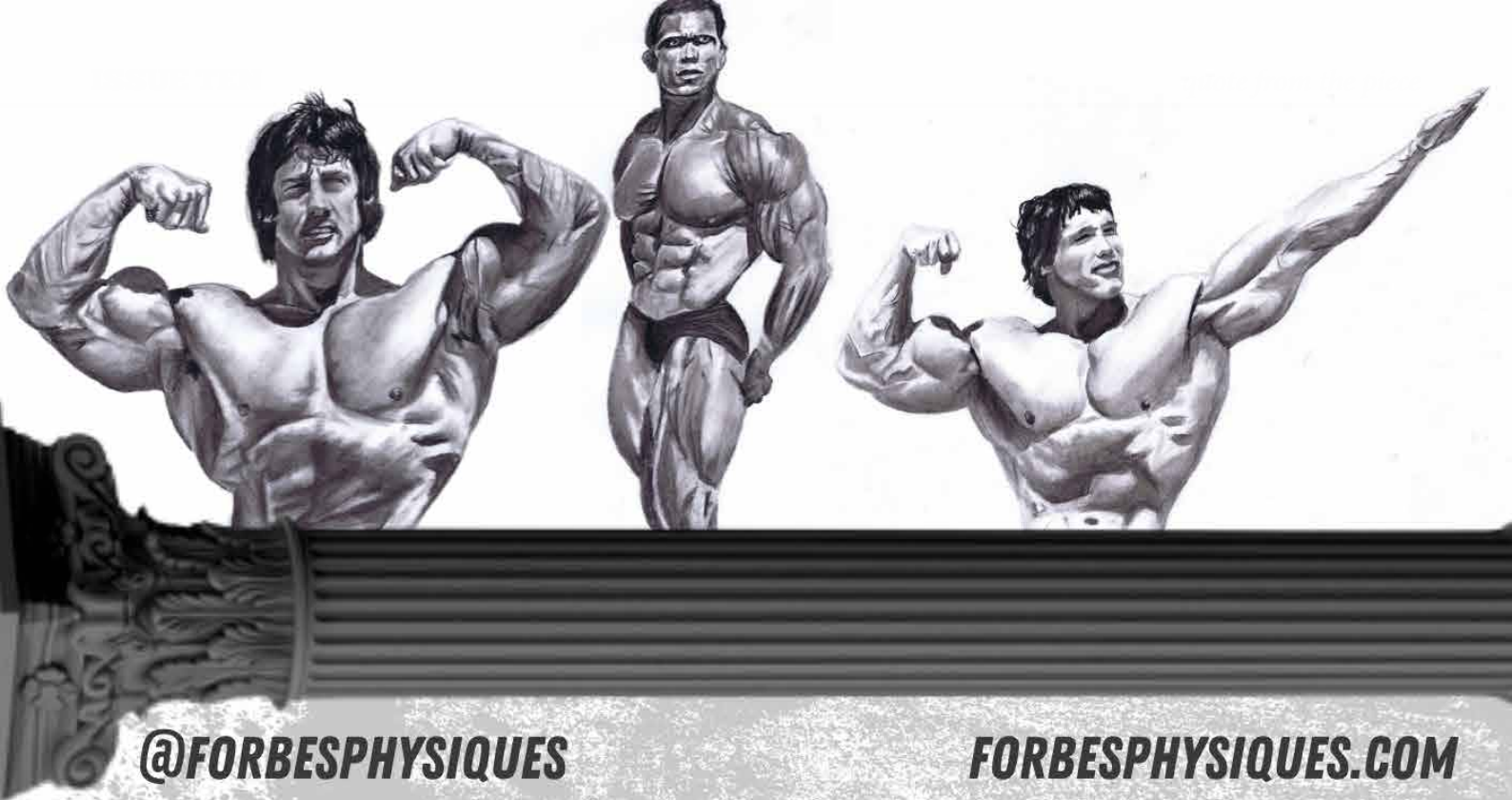

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